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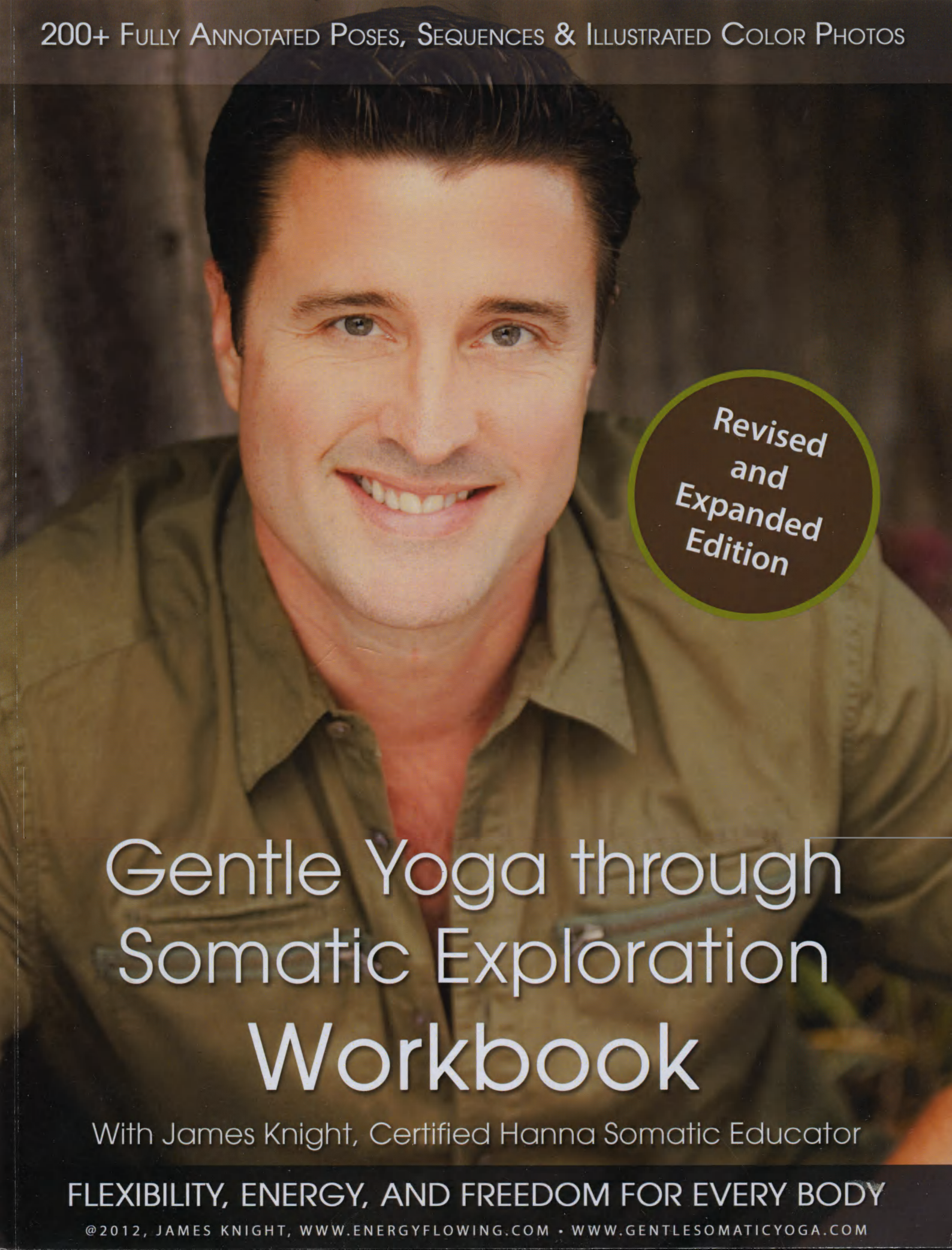

Revised and Expanded Edition

Gentle Yoga through Somatic Exploration Workbook

With James Knight, Certified Hanna Somatic Educator

FLEXIBILITY, ENERGY, AND FREEDOM FOR EVERY BODY

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Overview

Gentle Yoga through Somatic Exploration (GYSE) is a unique brain to muscle re-education that combines traditional yoga postures, Hanna Somatic Education, breathing techniques, and visualizations to expand your awareness of self. Through customized movements and meditation, muscles are reprogrammed to dissolve chronic pain, improve range of motion, and regain strength and control. I will be guiding you into an experience where you will be invited to feel a conscious alignment of mind/body/spirit.

I will be teaching you how to effectively rejuvenate the following areas:

- Neck, shoulders, wrists, and hands
- Upper and Lower back
- Hips, legs, knees, and feet

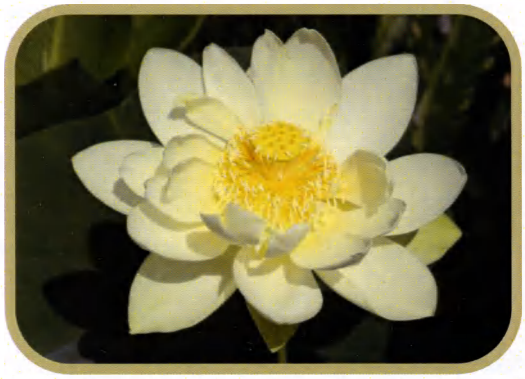
This process is not only considered therapeutic, but also educational. The detailed instructions are meant to trigger a different area of your brain that will create new and empowered patterns for healthy living.

The exercises may appear to be complex at the beginning. Many of my first-time students report that it feels like I am asking them to pat their head and rub their belly at the same time. This is good. I want them to be challenged. This is how the brain learns something new.

Through utilizing these techniques you are also participating with changing the outdated western science paradigm of health: relying solely on external third person authority for your own healing process. In this system of reeducation you are shifting into an empowered first person perspective and experience of self-sensing, self-correcting, and ultimately self-mastery.

Overall benefits:

- Pain reduction and/or elimination
- Flexibility
- Improved joint mobility
- Strengthening muscles
- Improved balance and coordination
- Overall physiological efficiency
- Relaxation
- Peace of mind



What I most appreciate about practicing GYSE are the cumulative effects. The more you do the exercises, the more long-term benefits you will enjoy!

James Knight, Certified Yoga Instructor and Hanna Somatic Educator

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About James and Gentle Yoga Through Somatic Exploration

People often ask me how I created this method of body movement.

I've always been interested in consciousness and learning how to live my life to its fullest potential. I'm a deeply spiritual person and I've been fortunate to have some amazing teachers in my life.

While I was attending Sonoma State University I took my first yoga class. It was called Somatic Yoga, taught by Eleanor Criswell.

I loved Somatic Yoga so much that I took it for several semesters in a row. Eleanor, Thomas Hanna's wife, taught me how to self regulate and experience myself from within.

This led to further professional training. By becoming a massage therapist and yoga instructor, I learned more about anatomy, physiology, and neuroscience. While I was studying for my Masters Degree, I enrolled in several advanced study programs including a three-year process to become a certified Hanna Somatic Practitioner.

Over the past 20+ years I've maintained a private practice, facilitated workshops locally and internationally, and continued my education with the most progressive modalities in the field of Healing Arts and Energy Medicine.

This workbook evolved from and expanded upon the body of work pioneered by Thomas Hanna, Eleanor Criswell, and Lawrence Gold. I am also inspired by Phil Shenk, Marilyn Warnock, Susan Koenig, Suresha Hill, Alanna Kaivalya, Tom and Trisha Kelly, as well as the instructors at the Novato Institute for Somatic Studies. For all those who are currently influencing my life and work in so many miraculous ways, I am truly grateful.

Over the years of teaching I have developed this new method of restorative movement. Gentle Yoga through Somatic Exploration is a combination of Hanna Somatic Education, Hatha Yoga, pranayama, quantum physics, and meditation. I consider this practice to be the most effective way to experience optimal health, and free your body of pain.

I'm passionate about sharing this knowledge with my clients, family, and friends. Thanks for taking this journey with me.

Namaste',

James Knight

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What is Hanna Somatic Education?

Hanna Somatic Education (HSE) is a safe, gentle and common sense approach to reverse chronic pain and increase your strength, flexibility, and coordination.

HSE is an effective form of mind-body training that involves movement and re-education. HSE goes directly to the root cause of most chronic muscular pain: the brain and the way in which it senses and organizes the muscles and movement.

By learning to regain awareness and motor control of muscles, the brain can remember how to relax and move the muscles properly. This process of sensory motor training creates more body awareness, vitality, and an overall sense of wellbeing.

Hanna Somatic Education particularly helps relieve pain and disability associated with common health complaints such as: headaches, stiff or painful joints and muscles, fatigue, poor posture, breathing problems, impaired movement, accident trauma and whiplash effects, back pain, and repetitive use/stress injuries.

HSE targets the condition of **Sensory Motor Amnesia (SMA).**

SMA is when part of our brain "forgets" how to relax chronically tight, contracted muscles that are, in effect, on "cruise control." We no longer have control over those muscles. Pain often persists because the muscles stay contracted even when you work to relieve them by various methods.

SMA originates from a variety of life experiences: repeated and reflexive responses to stress such as accidents, injuries, surgeries, repetitive tasks, and on-going emotional stress.

The resulting patterns of muscular contraction that develop result in such common conditions as chronic back, neck, shoulder and hip pain, limited mobility, joint pain, poor posture, shallow breathing, uneven leg length, and many conditions ending in '...itis': bursitis, tendonitis, etc...

By practicing HSE movements on a regular basis you will debunk the myth of aging and reverse the effects of **Sensory Motor Amnesia**. Practicing the exercises will provide cumulative results. You will enjoy rapid and significant improvement in physical comfort, posture, and radiant health.

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THOMAS HANNA AND THE ROOTS OF HANNA SOMATIC EDUCATION

Thomas Hanna (1928-1990) was a philosopher who, through many years of research, developed Hanna Somatic Education. Hanna spent his entire life searching for ways human beings could experience freedom, both physically and mentally. He wanted to encourage others to realize the power they have to take responsibility for their own lives.

After receiving a Ph.D. in philosophy and divinity from the University of Chicago in 1958, Hanna taught at Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia where later he became Chairman of the Department of Philosophy. He was also writer-in-residence at Duke University and the University of North Carolina in their Cooperative Program in the Humanities.

From 1965 to 1973, Hanna was Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Florida, where he had been hired to create the department's first doctoral program in philosophy. While there, he studied neurology at the Medical School. His experience in studying divinity, philosophy, and neurosciences led him to the idea that all life experiences lead to physical patterns in the body.

Hanna was elected a Fellow in the American Council of Learned Societies, which in 1969-1979 subsidized his writing of *Bodies in Revolt: A Primer in Somatic Thinking*. It was in this book that he redefined the Greek word "soma" to relate to modern times. "'Soma,'" he wrote does not mean 'body': it means ***'Me, the bodily being'***; "***Somas are you and I, always wanting life and wanting it more abundantly***" (pp. 35, 36-37).

He believed that all living beings are somas. **Somas are self-moving and self-experiencing sensory-motor systems**. Human somas have much in common with all somas, even with microscopic one-celled creatures.

Realization of these commonalities inspired Hanna to develop his theories. He viewed somas as the natural development of the universe. Somas have many of the characteristics of the universe itself, and Hanna pointed out that only living somas could move independently of the universe. Hanna believed that in the evolution of life natural selection followed a path of greater and greater freedom to finally arrive at the human soma.

In the early 1970's, Hanna, then Chairman of Philosophy at the University of Florida, was introduced to the work of Moshe Feldenkrais, an Israeli physicist and body educator that taught Functional Integration (FI). Meeting Feldenkrais and watching him work had a great impact on Hanna as the FI Method was compatible with Hanna's somatic philosophy. When Hanna was director of the Humanistic Psychology Institute (now the Saybrook Institute) he arranged the first Feldenkrais training program in the United States. He continued his study and practice with Feldenkrais for over 13 years. Later, he and his wife, Eleanor Criswell Ed.D. , founded the **Novato Institute for Somatic Research and Training.**

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Thomas Hanna and the Roots of Hanna Somatic Education

Hanna's work continued to evolve. He started to incorporate his own theory and method. Hanna believed that education is the manner in which a human can most effectively regain control of sensorimotor systems. In this way Hanna helped hundreds, if not thousands of people from all over the world come out of pain. He achieved this efficiently by addressing what he named sensory motor amnesia (see definition above in What is Somatic Education?). He coined the term "Somatics" in 1976.

In 1990 he offered his first training program for Hanna Somatic Education at the Novato Institute for Somatic Research and Training.

Noteworthy:

Some people ask what is the difference between Hanna Somatics and Feldenkrais? While the theory is similar in Functional Integration (FI) and Hanna Somatic Education (HSE) the main difference is found in hands on and table work. In FI the client is more passive and receives the work. In HSE the client is more interactive and does the majority of the work in a session.

Different areas of the brain are involved with the two approaches. FI primarily affects the sensory cortex, which controls feelings of touch and sensation. HSE primarily affects the motor cortex, which controls movements of fine and gross motor skills.

As mentioned above, Thomas Hanna is well known for introducing the concepts of self-regulation and sensory motor amnesia. Perhaps the most important thing that makes HSE stands out is the emphasis of guiding a person to experience the re-education from the first person point of view - from the inside out.

In addition to countless articles, essays, and other publications, books authored by Thomas Hanna include:

The Thought and Art of Albert Camus (1958)

The Lyrical Existentialists (1963)

Bodies in Revolt: A Primer in Somatic Thinking (1970)

The End of Tyranny: An Essay on the Possibility of America (1970)

The Body of Life (1980)

Somatics: Reawakening the Mind's Control of Movement, Flexibility, and Health (1988)

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Thomas Hanna and the Roots of Hanna Somatic Education

For those of you who would like more background:

The roots of Hanna Somatic Education were influenced by:

F. Matthias Alexander, father of the Alexander Technique, was the first person to take somatic education out of the realm of shamanistic mystery and establish it as a verifiable, pragmatic technique.

Quite independent of Alexander's work, Elsa Gindler, a physical education teacher in Berlin, created another approach to somatic education. She conducted classes in ***Gymnastik***, where she invited students to focus upon the sensations within their bodies as they went through various movements. Students were asked to focus their attention not on the movements themselves, but on the internal feelings of these movements. For example, How is one breathing during the movements? How does the weight of the body during movement shift over the heels, the hips, and so forth?

Gindler was making her students focus on the "means-whereby" rather than the "end" of external movement. The result was that "miraculous" changes began to occur in the bodies of those who trained with Gindler. Again, the principle was the same: Turn conscious attention inward to the proprioceptive background of an objective movement, and the quality of the objective movement begins to improve. Greater self-control is gained by means of greater sensory awareness.

Gerda Alexander added another presence to this burgeoning field of mind/body integration. She had no intellectual or familial relationship with F. Matthias Alexander. Working from her Copenhagen center, she expanded the field of sensory-motor learning with a new emphasis. She taught her students to become masters of proprioception -- sensory awareness became almost an end in itself. The end was self-knowledge, and this sensory knowledge resulted not only in grace, coordination, and good carriage, but also in a calm, measured life of the spirit. This was similar to the effects of F. Matthias Alexander's methods.

Moshe Feldenkrais, an Israeli physicist, went further with these principals as he opened a door to the possibility of a system of clinical somatic education. What was lacking was (1) a comprehensive diagnostic theory for understanding the origin of the typical neuromuscular postural distortions; (2) a general somatic theory of sensory-motor process, including introducing the concept of sensory motor amnesia; and (3) a method of somatic education that not only gave the learner the ***sensory*** feedback of Kinetic Mirroring and "means-whereby" instruction, but also went the full route of engaging the learner's ***motor*** actions so as to use the full capacity of the sensory-motor feedback loop. Moshe brought all of this and more to the field of Somatics.

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Gentle Yoga Through Somatic Exploration Video Tips and Guidelines

The movements you are learning are inherently safe and natural. However, if you have a medical condition or injury, please check with your physician to get approval for these exercises, and listen to the messages your body giving to you carefully.

Practiced properly, these movements relax and coordinate the musculature and nervous system. Occasionally, soreness may result for a day or two after doing the movements as the body releases toxins stored in the contracted muscles. However, if your soreness persists or worsens, stop doing these exercises and consult your physician or Health Care Professional.

To support you in your practice, please utilize the following tips and guidelines:

1. Environment and what to wear

It is preferable to do these exercises in a quiet area while lying on a blanket or yoga mat on a firm surface. The less external stimulus, the more effective your re-patterning will be. Mellow music, candles and low lighting can enhance a peaceful environment.

Wear loose and comfortable clothing.

Small pillows and blankets nearby can be useful for modifying the exercises.

2. Close your eyes during the movements

You are learning to self-reference. Keep your awareness on the sensations of your body. If your eyes remain open you could miss the subtleties of the movement and lessen the benefit.

3. Honor your limits - Feathering Technique

Be aware of what your body is telling you. You should never endure pain.

Once you identify your "edge" of soreness or tightness, then back off a little and explore that area of your body safely. Gracefully move in and out of the movements by varying the angle, speed and range of motion. Sometimes less is more. There are modifications for every exercise, so learn to trust what your body is telling you and adjust accordingly. Also, the benefits of doing these exercises are cumulative. Each time you practice them you will experience, if even small at first, an improvement in range of motion.

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4. Move slowly and make it smooth!

Take your time. The way to reverse old habitual patterns is through building internal awareness. Moving slowly and consciously will re-empower your muscle coordination. Think of these exercises as an ***exploration*** and not something to move through quickly so that you can say you've done them.

Ease and mobility will come over time! Never try to force, struggle, or push yourself. Some of these exercises may be challenging at first, but they are not meant to cause you strain or pain.

On the flip side, if something feels good... then keep doing it! If an exercise is bringing you pleasure, then enjoy and accentuate those feelings!

5. Focus your attention specifically on the muscles you are using

These movements are designed as a way to reeducate your mind and muscle cooperation. It is best to keep your attention focused on the specific muscles you are instructed to use.

Isolate each muscle or muscle group while keeping the rest of your body relaxed. For example, if the instruction is to lift your left shoulder only, then do the best you can to keep your right shoulder relaxed while you do the movement.

The unique signature of this work is the empowerment you gain because you are learning to self-regulate and regain control of the muscles in your body. The more control you have, the more choices you have in your body, which equals freedom on every level!

6. Pause and Enjoy! Become "Witness Consciousness"

Take time to feel the benefits from your efforts. After each exercise pause for at least 60 seconds and feel all of the new sensations in your body. Also notice your breath. I call this process using "witness consciousness". It is when you become the observer. It isn't so much a thought process as it is a "feeling" state.

As well as being enjoyable, the feedback that you are registering is important in the re-patterning. Your brain is integrating the new learning. Your brain especially enjoys learning through contrast. It is great to have "before and after" awareness of how you feel. This is easy to do when you are doing an exercise that first isolates just one side of your body. You pause, witness, and then do the other side.

Think of the re-set button on your computer. Isn't it nice when you run into difficulties on your computer and you can press one button and it brings you back into a neutral state and you can start over? Your muscles are doing the same thing after each exercise. Your body is recalibrating to a renewed and refreshed state.

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7. Repetition

The benefits of these exercises are cumulative.

I recommend doing these exercises several times a week. If you are strengthening injured muscles, it is beneficial to do these exercises once a day. If you are practicing these exercises as maintenance, it is beneficial to do them several times a week. Use your intuition and learn follow what your body is telling you.

The average repetition for each exercise is between three to ten. Usually we do more than ten. Don't overdo it. Less (and remember SLOW!) is better for this style of movement. Keep your attention focused on the muscle group you are re-patterning.

Remember, this is a "re-education" that you are giving your mind/body. The brain needs time to integrate the new learning before you move on.

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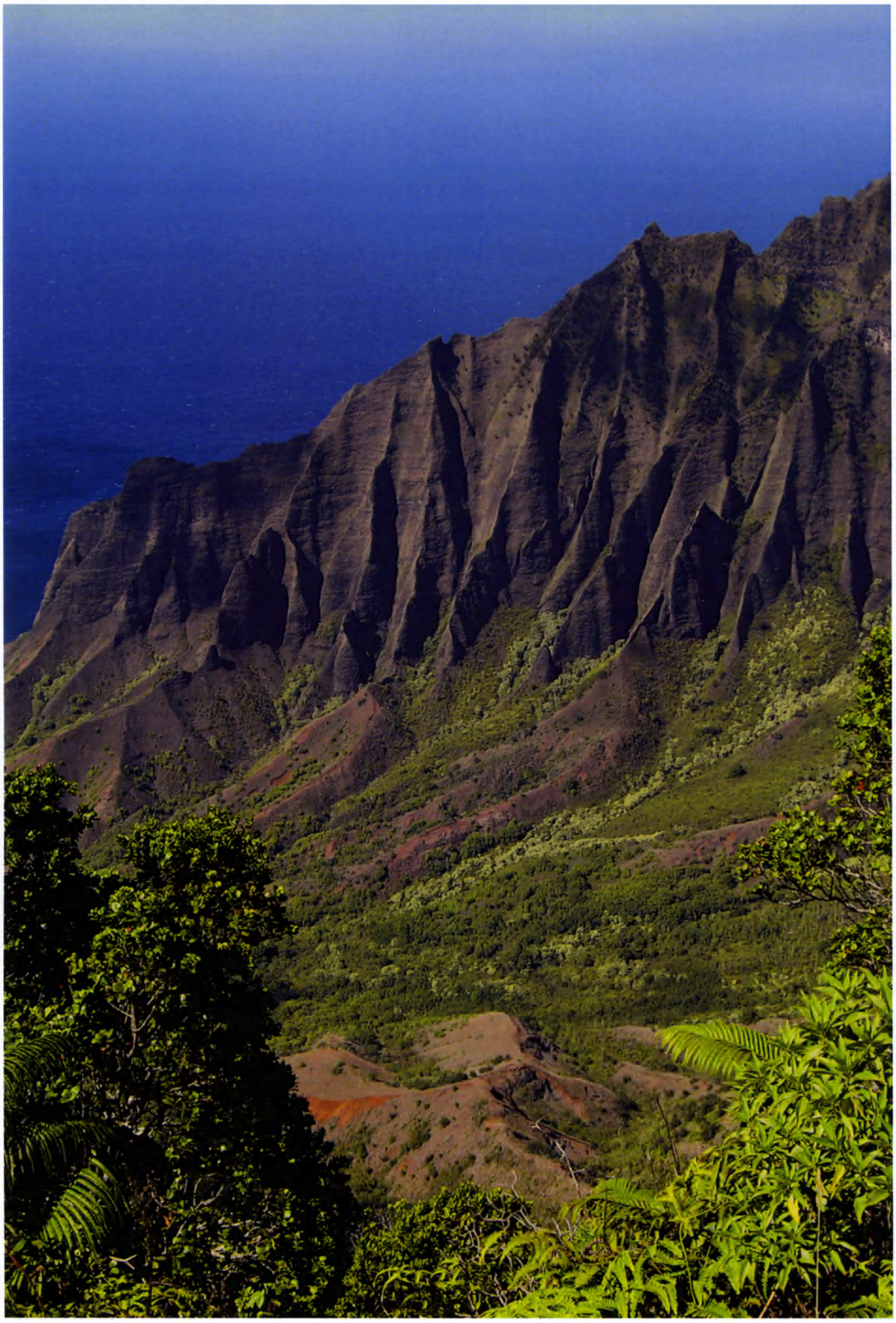

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Preparing Your Brain for Learning: Restorative Yoga Poses for Meditation

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Legs up the Wall / Viparita Karani—Restorative Pose for the Opening Meditation*

Time: 5-10 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is a gentle and powerful way to start your practice. With your legs up the wall (and eyes closed) you are intentionally bringing your full self into the moment by choosing to relax and shift brainwaves. This pose is also very restorative and rejuvenating for the mind/body.

Benefits

1. Trains your brain to become aware of different states of consciousness.
2. Increases blood flow to the brain.
3. Brings circulation to the upper body without putting strain on the heart.
4. Slows down and even reverses the aging process.
5. Relieves varicose veins or swelling of the feet.
6. Creates emotional balance and mental clarity.
7. Refreshes and rejuvenates your mind/body/spirit.

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Legs up the Wall / Viparita Karani—Restorative Pose for the Opening Meditation*

Time: 5-10 minutes

Teaching Points

- Sit on the floor with your side against a wall, knees bent, with one shoulder and hip touching the wall.
- Lower your back to the floor, with your legs bent, keeping your bottom close to the wall.
- Swing around to bring your legs up the wall, supporting yourself on your elbows and forearms.
- Once your legs are up the wall, bring your arms by your side with palms facing up.
- Close your eyes and start with the Three Part Breath (Pranayama). It is relaxing to make an audible sound on the exhale for the first three breath cycles.
- Bring your awareness to your feet and systematically scan for sensations.
- Practice "Witness Consciousness": move through your entire body systematically and continue to scan for sensation. With awareness of each body part have the intention to relax that part of your body.
- When you are finished scanning, continue to observe yourself lying on the floor breathing and relaxing. Any time your mind begins to wander (i.e. thinking about something else) then bring your awareness back to the moment.

Modifications

- If your lower back does not touch the floor when your legs are up the wall, then bend your knees, press your feet into the wall, lift your lower back off the floor and place a blanket under your bottom.
- With this modification your lower back should be supported. You can also bend your knees with your feet on the wall.

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Inverted Bound Angle
Supta Baddha Konasana*

Time: 1- 2 minutes

Description and Purpose

This continues to be part of the restorative yoga sequence where you are training the brain to stay in an alpha wavelength. It is also good for a transition (and relief!) after the legs have been up the wall for so long. Eyes are still closed and attention is focused inward.

Benefits

1. Frees energy flow in pelvic region.
2. Increases vitality in digestive organs.
3. Prepares pregnant women for childbirth (use bolsters).
4. Quiets the mind.
5. Relieves PMS and menopausal symptoms.
6. Relieves mild depression.
7. Stretches inner thighs and opens the groin area.

Teaching Points

- Your knees will open to the side as you bend them and draw the soles of your feet together. Slide your feet down the wall towards your pelvis, and then rest.
- This is still part of the meditation, so keep the mind calm and focused on the breath coming in and going out...

Modifications

If you have a blanket under your back from the previous postures you can experiment by removing it and notice how you feel.

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Reclining Twist*

Time: 2-3 minutes each side

Description and Purpose

This is part of the restorative yoga sequence where you are continuing to train the brain to stay focused inwardly. It is also a good movement for transition from lying to sitting. You are warming up the hips, lower back muscles, and the muscles surrounding the spine – from the tailbone to the head.

Benefits

1. Aids in digestion.
2. Improves breathing.
3. Eases back and neck tension.
4. Balances the nervous system.
5. Enhances coordination for synchronizing upper and lower body movement.

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Reclining Twist*

Time: 2-3 minutes each side

Teaching Points

- Bring knees slowly to chest and gently guide them over to the right.
- Bring your bottom ankle to the floor and stack your left ankle on top.
- Your knees are right angles from your hips and your ankles are right angles from your knees (as if you are sitting in a chair sideways).
- Bring your left shoulder down towards the floor.
- Slowly roll your head from side to side a few times as to relax your neck muscles, and then let the head settle in a neutral position (it doesn't need to be rolled to the left, unless it feels good).
- Tip your left hip forward a few inches and then back a few inches several times.
- Bring your left shoulder towards the floor and tuck it in towards your spine. Repeat this several times.
- Coordinate both hip and shoulder movements to happen at the same time.
- Rest for a few breaths and then slowly lift the knees and bring them to the left side.
- Repeat instructions for left side.
- When finished with this side, push your top hand down into the floor and roll slowly and gently to seated position. If you used props in the first position, you can use them to sit on to create a tall straight spine.

Modifications

When the shoulder and hip are moving at the same time it is an "organic movement". Some people cannot touch their knees together. That is ok. Also, some people cannot bring their shoulder to touch the floor. That is ok too.

If you are struggling with bringing your shoulder down, lay on their side with your arm resting on the waist.

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Warming Up Your Body

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EGYPTIAN

Time: 5 minutes

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This movement is designed to warm up the entire body. At the beginning you are breaking it down into two movements. After that you will combine them into one spiral movement. Listen to your body and move in a way that feels good to you. Make it an organic process and use your breath to move stagnant energy.

BENEFITS

1. Increases circulation and warm up the core.
2. Opens the chakras from the root up to the crown.
3. Activates your Kundalini. In yoga, Kundalini is encouraged to rise up the spine and awaken the energy centers (chakras).
4. Enhances your awareness. Shift your focus inwards and sense how your body feels.

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EGYPTIAN

Time: 5 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

- Start by sitting cross-legged and put your hands on top of your knees, palms facing down.
- Open your elbows wide and while isolating your ribs lean to the right. Lead with right elbow. The left hip should remain down on the floor.
- Move slowly to the left side.
- Move side to side and keep your shoulders parallel to the floor. Experience space in-between your ribs, and your ribs down to your hips.
- Now add a circular or spiral movement. As you move in a circle move into the places that feel stiff or sore. Encourage those places to open by using your breath.
- Now try moving in the opposite direction.

MODIFICATIONS

Use a folded blanket or pillow if you need support to sit upright without strain.

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Rainbow

Time: 4 minutes

Description and Purpose

This movement is designed to warm up the side body, neck, and shoulders. Move in a way that feels good to you. Explore the space you are sitting in: front, back, and side-to-side. Make it an organic process and use your breath to move stagnant energy.

Benefits

1. Increases circulation and blood flow.
2. Warms up the body for the Somatic Exploration exercises.
3. Enhances your awareness. Shift your focus inwards and sense how your body feels.

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Rainbow

Time: 4 minutes

Teaching Points

- Start by sitting cross-legged. Bring your right hand or elbow to the floor. Reach towards the ceiling with the left arm and then bring it down to the floor.
- Lift the arm back up and imagine you are tracing the outline of a rainbow.
- Move back and forth with the left arm and explore the space created by leaning to the right. Make sure you bring your arm up and down in different planes so that you are stretching a wide variety of muscles.
- Switch sides and do the same with the left hand or elbow on the floor. Reach with your right arm and explore the space you are sitting in.
- Make the movement slow and smooth. Keep your eyes closed and move in a way that feels good.

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Heart Activation

Time: 3 minutes

Description and Purpose

This movement is designed to warm up the front and back body. Lead with your heart and breathe space into the center of your chest. This will help you raise your energy and open the heart.

Benefits

1. Increases circulation and blood flow.
2. Warms up the body and prepare for the Somatic Exploration exercises.
3. Enhances awareness and opens your heart center.
4. Releases stress levels. Letting go of all non-beneficial energies.
5. Becoming more grounded and heart centered.

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Teaching Points

- Sitting cross-legged, place your hands on your knees, and inhale deeply.
- Lean back, drop your chin to your chest, and suck your lower belly in towards your spine. Round (broaden) the upper shoulders forward. Exhale.
- As you inhale lead with your heart and lift your upper body. Squeeze your shoulder blades together.
- Continue this cycle of moving back and forth with conscious deep breaths.
- From time to time vary the speed and rhythm of the breath cycle and movement.
- Another variation is to balance on your knees and lift your pelvis and heart to the ceiling. Arch your back and look back. Inhale.
- Exhale as you bring your pelvis back down, round your upper body over your knees, bring your head towards the floor. Rest here for a few seconds.
- If it feels good you can repeat this last cycle several times.
- Finish by sitting cross-legged with your hands on top of your knees, palms facing down. Eyes closed. Notice how you feel.

Modifications

Go slow at the beginning of this movement. You will be rocking forward and backward. Have intention to synchronize your breath with the movement. Enjoy the process of feeling the front and the back of your heart opening. Imagine a beautiful emerald green beam of light going through your heart from the front to the back.

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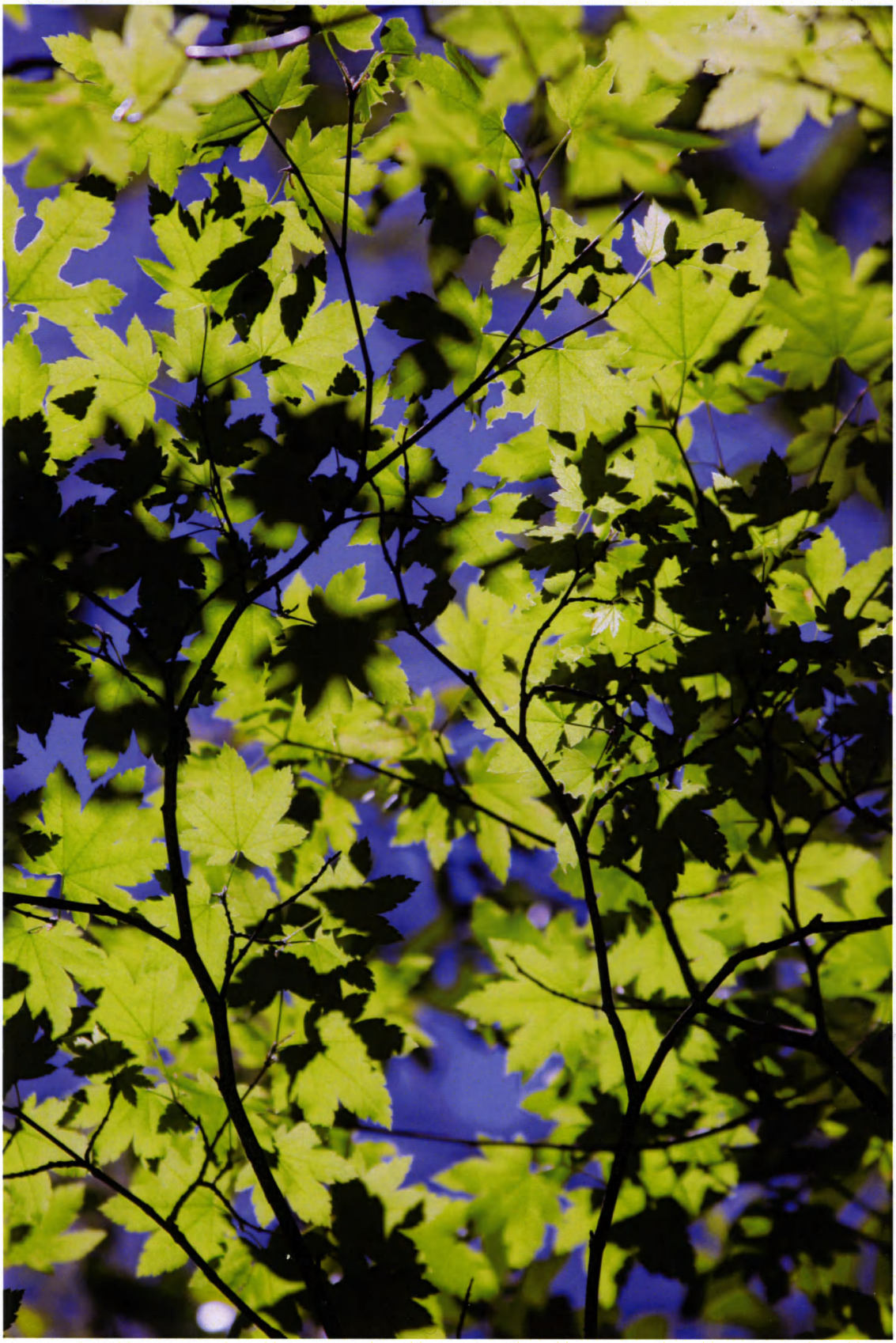

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Neck, Shoulders, and Hands

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Neck Release: Foot Sliders*

Time: 5 minutes

Description and Purpose

This movement helps to lengthen and re-pattern the same muscles in "Bowing Forward": the muscles that attach near or on the back of the head and fan out down towards your shoulders and middle part of your back. This is one of my favorite Somatic exercises to teach because of the highly noticeable increase in range of motion in your neck every time you complete the exercise.

Benefits

1. Increases neck flexibility.
2. Restores range of motion in the neck.
3. Relieves neck tension and pain.
4. Breathe more easily.
5. Helps with dizziness or numbness and tingling of fingers, in chronic situations.
6. Improves overall posture.

Teaching Points

- Sitting with your knees bent, bring your feet flat on the floor.
- Bring your knees close to your chest and wrap your arms around your legs.
- With your eyes open, tilt your head back and pick a spot on the ceiling that you will remember as a reference. At the end of the exercise you will check again to notice if you've increased the range of motion with your neck.

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Neck Release: Foot Sliders*

Time: 5 minutes

Modifications

If your wrist hurts with the palm flat on the floor, make a fist or a tripod with your fingers and rest in that position. If your wrist still hurts, then take a break and stretch.

If your toes cramp, then don't curl or arch your foot as much. This will lessen over time as you practice this exercise.

Teaching Points

- Bring your hands to a comfortable position behind you on the floor.
- Bring your heels closer to your pelvis, feet still on the floor.
- Relax your shoulders and stomach and breath naturally.
- Start with the right foot and slide it forward on the floor about 18 inches or so, pivot on your heel, and raise your toes. With your toes still lifted, curl your toes toward the floor.
- Next, bring the ball of your right foot back down, toes uncurled, and slide the foot flat on the floor - back towards the pelvis.
- Keeping the ball of your foot firm on the floor, lift and spread your toes pointed up. (Make sure the ball and heel are firmly on the floor)
- Start over again and slide the same foot out 18 inches and repeat this movement several times.
- When you are finished with the right side, hug your knees to your chest, with your arms wrapped around, and look back. Did you increase your range of motion?
- Repeat with other foot. Finish the movement with checking your range of motion again by holding onto your knees and arching your head and eyes looking back. Notice if there was a change.

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Neck Release: Bowing Forward*

Time: 2 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is a somatic movement, so think of it as an exploration rather than an exercise.

This movement helps to lengthen and re-pattern the muscles that attach near or on the head and travel down between the upper back and shoulder blades. These are the muscles that keep our head from falling completely forward in our lap. For many people who work with computers these muscles are sore and fatigued.

Your hand to muscle contact will be giving some feedback to your brain. But remember, you don't want to apply too much pressure with your hands against the head because it could overstrain the neck muscles.

Benefits

1. Increases neck flexibility.
2. Restores range of motion in the neck.
3. Relieves neck tension and pain.
4. Breathes more easily.
5. Helps with dizziness or any numbness and tingling of fingers, in chronic situations.
6. Improves overall posture.

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Neck Release: Bowing Forward*

Time: 2 minutes

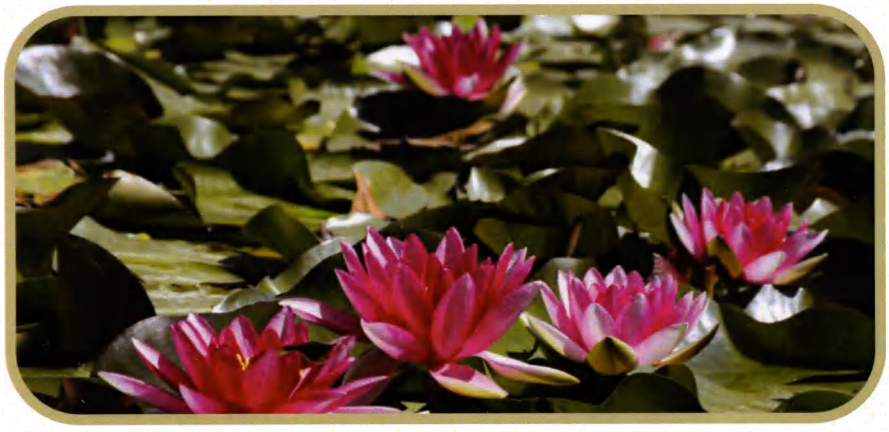
Teaching Points

- While sitting tall, interlace your fingers behind your head.
- Tilt your head back into your hands and arch your neck. Elbows go back. Apply steady but light pressure with your hands and bring your chin towards your chest about five inches, and then stop.
- Start moving again and continue to guide your head forward four or five inches closer to your chest and stop.
- Next, guide your chin all the way down towards your chest. Bring your elbows close together and allow the weight of your hands to give your neck a gentle stretch.
- When you are finished with the stretch release the hands and bring them down to rest on your knees. Slowly raise your head by curling up one vertebrate at a time.
- When your head is back to a neutral position then you can lift and roll your shoulders back in small circles several times, then reverse directions.
- Pause for a couple of breaths and repeat.

Modifications

If you have trouble sitting without support you can sit on folded blankets, lean your back against the wall, or sit in a chair.

If the neck is chronically tight, then perhaps it is best to start the exercise with one hand, instead of two, behind the head. In either case, very little pressure is needed for maximum benefit.



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Head Rotations*

Time: 2 minutes

Description and Purpose

This exercise is performed continuously and in an organic fashion. The entire upper body can be involved with this movement, especially the shoulders and upper torso. It is a great way to set the pace for the rest of your practice.

Benefits

1. Increases neck flexibility and mobility.
2. Restores range of motion in the neck.
3. Relieves neck tension and pain.
4. Breathe more easily.
5. Helps relieve dizziness or numbness and tingling of fingers, in chronic situations.
6. Improves neck posture.

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Head Rotations*

Time: 2 minutes

Teaching Points

- Start from a cross legged sitting position with your palms facing downward, resting on your knees.
- Slowly drop your chin to the chest and start to roll your head to the right.
- While your head rolls to the right bring your left shoulder down, and start exploring how you can move this shoulder to gain more benefit from the stretch.
- As your head continues to roll, tilt your head back and squeeze your shoulder blades together.
- While your head rolls to the left bring your right shoulder down and start exploring how you can move this shoulder to gain more benefit from the stretch.
- As your chin drops to the chest you can hold onto your knees with your hands, let your torso roll forward and broaden your shoulders... make it an organic movement. Do what feels good!
- Continue with this motion of creating big round circles with your head. Allow your upper body to move with the roll.
- After a few circles, change directions of the neck roll.

Modifications

These head rotations should be slow and controlled with no neck pain or discomfort. Exercise should be smooth movements with no jerkiness. Remember to relax the jaw to keep the face muscles from tensing up. Encourage your torso move freely. It is not necessary to stay sitting upright and rigid.

If you have difficulty sitting upright without support, then try sitting on a block or folded blanket. If this is not enough, then sitting against a wall would be fine too. The movements will just be smaller.

Most importantly, this sequence is meant to feel good, not painful. On occasion you might hear a snap, crackle, or pop. This is normal. However, if you experience discomfort anywhere then back off a bit and do a much smaller movement.

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Neck Release: Nodding "Yes"*

Time: 2 minutes

Description and Purpose

This movement helps to lengthen and re-pattern the muscles surrounding the sides of the neck: scalene, sternocleidomastoid, and the levator scapulae. The levator is a skeletal muscle situated at the back and side of the neck, and leading down on top of the shoulder. When people complain that their shoulders hurt, they are usually referring to the levator scapulae.

Benefits

1. Increases neck flexibility and mobility.
2. Restores range of motion in the neck.
3. Relieves neck tension and pain.
4. Breathe more easily.
5. Helps with dizziness or any numbness and tingling of fingers, in chronic situations.
6. Improves overall posture.

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Neck Release: Nodding "Yes"*

Time: 2 minutes

Teaching Points

- While sitting tall, drop your chin to your chest and roll your head over towards your right shoulder.
- Cradle your right arm over your head.
- With light pressure from your hand on your head, nod your head forward and backward slowly... feeling a nice stretch down the left side of your neck.
- Draw the right shoulder down as you're nodding. Make organic movements with the left shoulder (slowly "wiggle" the left shoulder forward and backward) to encourage the stretch.
- When you are finished with the left side, drop your chin toward the chest and roll your head over toward the left shoulder.
- Repeat the movement on the other side.
- When you are finished with the right side, drop your chin to the chest, release the left hand that is arched over the head, and curl up one vertebrate at a time.
- When your head is back to a neutral position then roll your shoulders several times. Reverse the shoulder rolls.

Modifications

If you have trouble sitting without support, you can sit on some folded blankets, lean your back against the wall, or sit in a chair.

If the neck is chronically tight, then perform the exercise without your hand applying pressure over the head. You will still gain benefit.

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Shoulder Release: Celtic Cross*

Time: 7 minutes

Description and Purpose

This movement helps to lengthen and re-pattern the muscles surrounding the shoulder. It is highly effective for relieving pain and tension on top of the shoulders, between the shoulder blades, and also the front of the neck and chest.

Benefits

1. Increases shoulder flexibility and mobility.
2. Restores range of motion in the shoulder.
3. Relieves tension and pain on top of the shoulders.
4. Helps reduce migraines and headaches, in chronic situations.
5. Improves overall posture.

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Shoulder Release: Celtic Cross*

Time: 7 minutes

Teaching Points

There are 5 sets of instruction for this exercise.

Rhomboids

- Lying on your right side, bend your knees at right angles from your hips and your ankles at right angles to your knees (like you are sitting in a chair sideways). Bottom arm is off to the side. Top arm is in a neutral position resting on your left side and your hand flat on your left hip. Head is resting on the floor.
- Your left arm and hand are resting on your side in a neutral position. Guide your left shoulder back toward your spine. Feel and contract the muscles between your shoulder blade and the spine.
- Release the contraction and bring your left shoulder back to neutral.
- Repeat squeezing the rhomboid muscles and releasing them several times.
- Make sure to rest in-between repetitions. (Option: You can change the angle of your shoulder moving behind you. Also you can arch the back as you guide the shoulder blade back.)

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SHOULDER RELEASE: CELTIC CROSS*

Time: 7 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

Pectoralis

- Your left arm and hand are resting on your side in a neutral position. Roll your top shoulder forward toward your chest. You are engaging the muscles of the pectoralis. You can accentuate this feeling by rolling your arm but your left hand still remains on the left hip. Squeeze the muscles in the upper chest and then return back to a neutral position.
- Release the contraction of the chest muscles and bring your shoulder back to neutral.
- Relax the neck muscles and pause between each repetition.
- Repeat this several times.

Upper Trapezius and Neck Muscles

- Your left arm and hand are resting on your side in a neutral position. Raise shoulder to ear. Start off with the head on the floor. Feel which muscles you are using to lift the shoulder.
- Squeeze and release. (Option: If your neck doesn't have any injuries or chronic tension, you can lift your ear towards your shoulder to enhance the effect).
- Return back to neutral position and pause between each repetition. Repeat several times.

Latissimus dorsi

- Your left arm and hand are resting on your side in a neutral position. Keeping the head on the floor with neck muscles relaxed, guide your left hand down past your hip. You will feel your muscles contracting underneath your armpit and waist. It is a small movement.
- Squeeze and release.
- Repeat several times and always come back to a neutral position between each repetition.

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Shoulder Release: Celtic Cross*

Time: 7 minutes

Teaching Points

Big circles for mind/body integration

- Your left arm and hand are resting on your side in a neutral position. Creating a big circular movement with your left shoulder: Start by tipping your shoulder back, roll the shoulder down, roll the shoulder in front and keep rolling the shoulder up toward the ear.... And back again...
- Focus and isolate your left shoulder. Try closing your eyes and make the movement smooth and slow. If you feel any bumps, skips, or tight sensations during your rotation, feel free to guide the shoulder back and forth to remove "the kinks"... and then keep on with the circles.
- After a while, reverse the direction.... This should feel really good – like a self massage. Keep the neck relaxed the entire time.
- Before doing this exercise on the other side, roll onto your back and feel the difference between your left and right side of the upper back/shoulder area. The brain likes to learn from experiencing contrast. This is all part of the reeducation.
- Roll onto your left side and repeat the 5 sets of instruction.
- When you are finished, roll onto your back again and take a few long, deep breaths. Become "Witness Consciousness".

Modifications

You will be lying on your side for a period of time. If your neck feels strained then you can use a pillow under your head. Otherwise, you can rest your head on your bottom shoulder.

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Inside/Out*

Time: 5 minutes

Description and Purpose

This movement is designed to reeducate and stretch the muscles of your wrists, hands, and fingers. This exercise is perfect for those who spend a lot of time on the computer, and/or driving. Take a break in your day and practice these movements. You'll be glad you did!

Benefits

1. Flexibility of the wrists, hands, and fingers.
2. Relief for symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome.
3. Preventive for other types of challenges that involve repetitive motion with the hands.

Teaching Points

Starting position: Sitting comfortably with your hands raised and clasped in front of your face. Fingers are interlaced and elbows together.

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INSIDE/OUT*

Time: 5 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

While griping your fingers and palms, slowly open and raise your elbows until the palms want to separate.

TEACHING POINTS

Keep raising your wrists and elbows a couple more inches. Your wrists will start to bend backwards and then allow the palms to separate. At this point you will feel a stretch in your fingers. Decide what your limit is. If you feel pain, then back off.

TEACHING POINTS

- Now bring your palms, fingers still gripped, facing away from you. Straighten your elbows. You will continue to feel a good stretch in the fingers and palms. Stay in the stretch for a few moments.
- Repeat this several times.

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INSIDE/OUT*

Time: 5 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

Variation: Try this sequence with your hands clasped above your head.

TEACHING POINTS

- When you are finished, it is nice to bend your wrists in the opposite direction. In other words, flex the wrist forward and gently push your palm towards the inside of your forearm.
- Make a soft fist and rotate both your hands in a circular movement.
- Change directions.
- Massaging your fingers would add an extra bonus (and it feels good too!).

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Compass

Time: 10 minutes

Description and Purpose

This movement sequence is to help you release tension in all parts of the neck. Because there are 18 muscles in the neck the instructions ask you to change the angle of your head when you finish each repetition. This exercise will also help you re-pattern old habits of holding stress into experiencing better range of motion and pain-free muscles.

Benefits

1. Improves range of motion turning left and right over your shoulders.
2. Relieves pain and stiffness in the neck.
3. Helps reduce pain and eliminate headaches.
4. Helps improve your posture.

Teaching Points

- While lying on your back, knees bent and together, feet are close in towards the buttocks, elbows are bent, and the back of the wrists touching the floor near the face.
- As you are pressing down with your feet, lift your hips high. Neck and throat relaxed.

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COMPASS

Time: 10 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

- While your hips are still lifted, raise your head and hands off the floor, and slightly tuck the chin.
- Keeping your head lifted, slowly lower your hips to the floor.
- When the hips touch the floor, slowly lower the head back down

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Compass

Time: 10 minutes

Teaching Points

- Now turn your head a couple of inches or so to the right, and then repeat the same process you did above (the only thing that has changed is the angle of the head).
- Turn your head a couple more inches to the right, and repeat this process again until you are at your full capacity of rotation.
- Now it is time to work your way backwards until your chin is back to center. Reverse the cycle.
- Now do the sequence while turning the head/neck to the left side and lift it at the varying angles.
- When you are finished with both sides, roll your head side to side on the floor slowly, and then rest in Savasana.

Modifications

Use your hands behind your head to help support the weight as you lift. This is especially true for those of you who have had, or still have neck issues. As well, you may want to cut the repetitions in half. Ease your way into it, and remember the results are cumulative.

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VOGUE

Time: 4 minutes

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This movement is designed to warm up the side body, neck, and shoulders. Move in a way that feels good to you. Explore the space you are sitting in: front, back, and side-to-side. Make it an organic process and use your breath to move stagnant energy.

BENEFITS

1. Relieves tension in the shoulders and neck.
2. Increases your range of movement in the neck, especially turning left and right.
3. Enhances your awareness. Shift your focus inwards and sense how your body feels.

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VOGUE

Time: 4 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

- Lie on your back and extend both legs. Roll your head to the right. Bend your right elbow and tuck your right palm under your ear. Bend the right knee slightly off to the side.
- Draw your awareness to your neck and upper shoulder. Press your right ear into your hand. Slowly relax and then repeat it several times resting in-between each repetition.
- Next, press your shoulder and elbow down into the floor. It is also beneficial to tuck the right shoulder blade underneath you when you are pressing down with the elbow. Notice how the lower back arches a bit.
- Break it down into two parts: Press your ear into your hand and then press your elbow down, and then arch your lower back a little bit. Relax. Repeat the cycle several times.
- Add the right knee pressing into the floor after you pressed the ear into your hand and the elbow down. You will notice the lower back arching even more. Repeat several times and rest in-between each cycle.
- Instead of breaking the movements, try doing all three movements as one fluid movement. Repeat several times.
- To finish, bring your arm back down and your head back to center. Feel free to wiggle and stretch a bit.
- Repeat the other side.

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Quick Neck Relief

Time: 3 minutes

Description and Purpose

This movement is another pain eraser for the neck and upper shoulder area. It can be performed alone if you need something for quick relief, or it can be done before or after another Somatic Exploration exercise.

Benefits

1. Releases pain/tension in the neck, shoulders, and upper back.
2. Regains control of the muscles of your upper body and neck.
3. Explores and increase your range of motion.
4. Great preparation and warm up for doing other Somatic Exploration exercises.

Teaching Points

- Lying on your belly bring your palms facing down underneath the shoulders. Head is turned to the left side and right ear is resting on the floor.
- Lift your upper body and head off the floor. Slowly begin to rotate the head to the right. Lower your head back to the floor (left ear will be touching now), and make sure to relax your head, neck, and shoulders completely before doing another repetition.
- Repeat to the other side.
- Continue for 3 repetitions each side.

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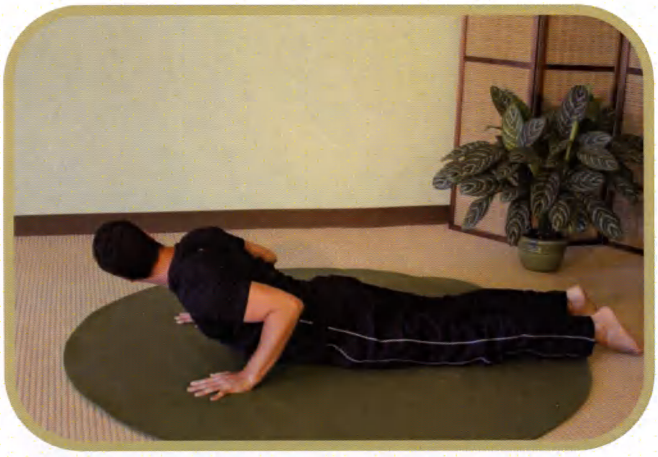
Quick Neck Relief

Time: 3 minutes



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Quick Neck Relief

Time: 3 minutes

Teaching Points

Variation: Pick up your head by using your upper back and neck muscles.

- Reverse the movement by broadening your shoulders and tucking the chin.
- Repeat several times.... Slowly.
- When finished, roll onto your back with your arms and legs stretched out. Close your eyes, roll your head on the floor from side to side, and then relax everything.
- When you get up please make sure that you roll your body off to one side and then slowly curl back to standing. Enjoy your new range of motion and freedom in the neck and shoulders!

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Arching

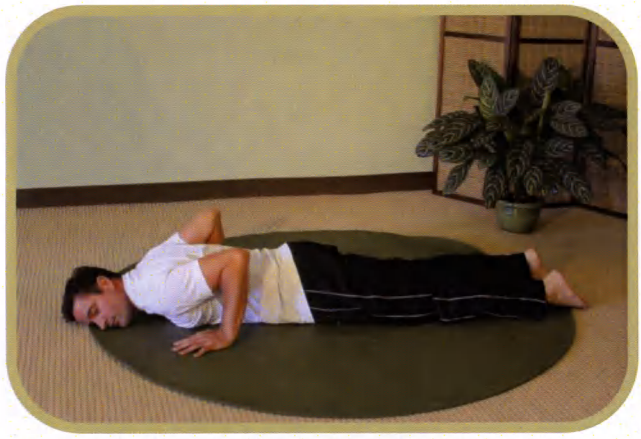
Time: 5 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is a great exercise to teach the muscles of your neck, shoulders, and upper back to relax. As with all Somatic Exploration movements, you are guided to isolate specific muscles and learn how to control them. In this exercise you are using your own body weight and gravity to unwind and release old patterns.

Benefits

1. Releases tension in the neck, shoulders, and upper back.
2. Regains control of the muscles of your upper body and neck.
3. Explores and increase your range of motion.
4. Gains body awareness and coordination.



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ARCHING

Time: 5 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

- Lying on your belly bring your palms facing down underneath the shoulders. Head is turned to the right side and resting on the floor.
- Pick an imaginary spot behind you. Leading with your left shoulder, keep your eyes open and guide your upper body in that direction.
- Even though you are pushing with your hands on the floor, have intention to keep your right side relaxed and use the muscles of your upper back and neck on the left side to initiate the movement.
- Keep lifting until your belly is slightly lifted and your spine is twisting. Notice where you feel the contraction of the muscles and then slowly lower yourself down.
- When you reach the floor let all your muscles relax. Make sure you check in with your neck and upper shoulders.
- Take a breath or two and then pick another spot to look at and rise up at a different angle.
- Repeat this a few times and then try the other side. Make sure you rest in-between each repetition.

MODIFICATIONS

If you have chronic neck issues, don't worry how high you come up off the floor. Work your way into the movement. Use the feathering technique (described in Tips and Guidelines). Also, before you do this movement sequence try practicing the "**Quick Neck Relief**" exercise and it will help to warm up your body and stay safe.

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TURTLE*

Time: 5 minutes

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This Somatic Exploration will lead you into reeducating your entire back body. It is not very often that we ask our brain to isolate and refine the movement of so many specific muscles of the neck, shoulders, and entire back. This isolation requires concentration and cooperation from all of your body. You may find that over time through practicing this exercise most or all pain stored in those muscles will be erased.

BENEFITS

1. Minimizes or completely diminishes pain in the neck, shoulders, and back.
2. Relieves and potentially corrects herniated discs.
3. Relieves and potentially corrects pinched nerves.
4. Increases range of motion of the neck, shoulders, and back.
5. Strengthens the core.
6. Aids in digestion.
7. Helps coordination with the upper and lower body.
8. Increases sensory awareness of your back body.
9. Improves overall posture.

TEACHING POINTS

- There are 4 parts to this exercise.

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TURTLE*

Time: 5 minutes

TEACHING POINTS - 1ST PART: ELBOW LIFTS

- Lying on your belly, bend your right elbow and slide the back of your right hand underneath you face. Left arm is by your side.
- Keep your face connected to the back of your right hand and just lift the right elbow towards the ceiling. Tuck your shoulder in towards your neck. You can also tilt your head slightly towards the ceiling and bring it towards your shoulder.
- Explore the areas of your neck and shoulder that might register as discomfort. Squeeze these places and then guide your elbow back down and rest.
- Do this several times, relaxing completely between each repetition.

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TURTLE*

Time: 5 minutes

2ND PART: HEAD, HAND, AND ELBOW LIFTS

- Next, still keeping your hand connected to your face, lift the right elbow first, and then lift the head and hand. Do your best to make sure your left shoulder and the rest of your body are in a relaxed position on the floor.
- Feel the muscles in your upper back and shoulder... slowly guide the upper body down and make sure when your body is back on the floor that you relax the neck.
- Rest for a breath and then repeat this several times.

3RD PART: COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION

- Next, repeat Parts #1 and #2. When the elbow, head and hand are lifted keep the head raised, but slowly bring the elbow back down to the floor (hand and face are still touching).
- Now guide the head and hand back down to the floor and relax everything.
- Pause for a breath or two and then repeat this pattern several times.

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TURTLE*

Time: 5 minutes

4TH PART: INCORPORATE LOWER BODY

- Lift the head, right hand, elbow, shoulder, and your left leg leading with your heel off the floor. Your body will feel like it is in a bow shape.
- Slowly lower your leg and upper body down at the same time. (If you have performed the "Cat Stretch" in this workbook, this part of the movement is also the "X" exercise)
- Rest in-between sets and then repeat several times.
- Continue with the same sequence on your other side, leading with your left elbow.

MODIFICATIONS

If you have a history of storing chronic tightness in the neck or upper shoulders, please utilize the hand that is under your face to help you lift the weight of your head.
Also, remember that you can "feather" into it, or don't lift your body high off the ground at first.
To make sure your neck and shoulders aren't holding any leftover tension try performing the **Quick Neck Relief** and/or **Head Rotation** exercises.

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Swimming Shoulders*

Time: 8 minutes

Description and Purpose

Many people complain about pain and stiffness in the neck and shoulder area. This is an excellent sequence to bring mobility and range of motion to these areas of your body. Use your imagination and visualize the strokes a swimmer makes. Transpose that into your own body and move your shoulders as if you were swimming. That visualization will help you discover the movement.

Benefits

1. Melts stress and pain away from the shoulder and neck areas.
2. Increases range of motion.
3. Improves posture.
4. Relieves a headache. If you don't have a headache, then this exercise is preventative if you are prone to get them.
5. Gains coordination and control over muscles that may have had Sensory Motor Amnesia.

Teaching Points

There are 3 parts to this exercise.

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SWIMMING SHOULDERS*

Time: 8 minutes

1ST PART - SHOULDERS SWIMMING SEPARATELY

- Lying on your belly bring your hands underneath the shoulders – palms down, and forehead resting on the floor. Uncurl your toes and place your toenails facing down on the floor.
- Start by picking up the head a few inches off the floor. Elongate the neck by looking down, and taking the left shoulder back and the right shoulder forward.
- With a swimming motion, circle the left shoulder forward and the right shoulder back. It will be an elliptical movement. Continue in a slow and fluid motion for 5 - 7 cycles. Your head will wobble from side to side.
- When you have finished, please rest your head on the floor. Rest with your head turned to the left with your right ear on the floor. Breathe deeply and coax your neck and shoulders to relax on the exhale.
- Repeat the movement, but reverse the direction of the shoulders. "Swim" backwards.
- After you're finished going both directions, rest with your arms by your side and your head turned to the right. Your left ear will be touching the floor. Take a few deep breaths and relax everything.

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SWIMMING SHOULDERS*

Time: 8 minutes

2ND PART - SHOULDERS SWIMMING TOGETHER

- Move back to the starting position. This time pick your head up off the floor a few inches, with the neck long (eyes looking down), and shrug/roll both shoulders forward.
- In one continuous elliptical movement, guide both shoulders back at the same time. While swimming if you have performed or watched the breast stroke, then this is the movement you are mimicking with your shoulders.
- After 5 - 7 cycles, reverse this circular movement.
- Rest with your arms by your sides and rest your right ear on the floor. Take a few deep, conscious breaths and relax your entire body.
- After you are finished going both directions, rest your arms down by your sides and turn your head to the left side (your right ear will be touching the floor).
- Notice how you are feeling. Take some deep breaths and melt into the floor.

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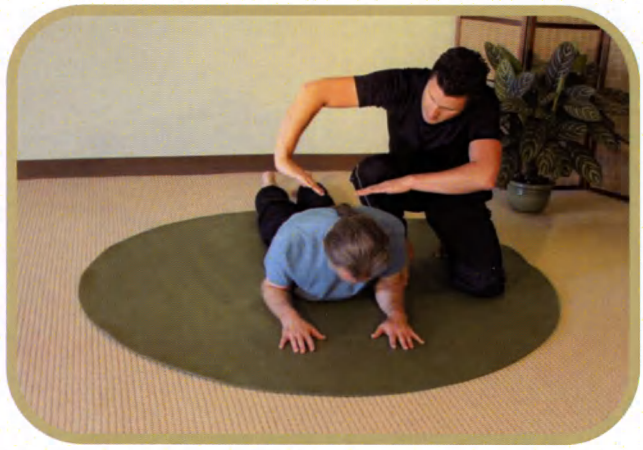
SWIMMING SHOULDERS*

Time: 8 minutes



3RD PART – SHOULDERS BROADEN THEN COME BACK TOWARD THE SPINE

- Move back to the starting position. Pick the head up off the floor a few inches, with the neck long (eyes looking down), and then hold the intention to move your shoulders laterally. To do this broaden your shoulders and create space between your spine and your shoulder blades. Now change and narrow your shoulder blades, close to your spine.
- Don't worry if this feels awkward, you probably have never done a movement like this before. Do the best you can. Think of a lizard on a hot rock that is puffing itself up to be bigger than it is!
- Repeat this 5 – 7 cycles and then rest with your arms by your side and your head to the right
  (the left ear will be on the floor).
- When you are finished, roll over and lay on your back with your arms and legs extended. Pause and notice how you feel by doing a quick internal body scan with your awareness. Feel the energy moving throughout your body! We call this the "somatic buzz"

MODIFICATIONS

Once again, if you have a history of chronic neck or shoulder pain then please take it easy. Listen to your body and only do as much as you can comfortably.

When your shoulders are moving, it is important to keep your head and neck as relaxed as you can. As your upper body is moving let your head wobble side to side. In other words, don't let your neck "freeze" in one position. Also, remember to breath!

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The Body From Head to Toe

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CAT STRETCH SERIES*

Time: 10 minutes

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This exercise sequence will affect almost every major muscle in the body. If you only had a short time to do your Somatic Exploration exercises, this would be the series to do. I teach this sequence in almost every class because it warms up the core and prepares the body for more advanced techniques.

It is nice to start and end in Savasana. Notice the difference how you feel before and after performing the exercises.

BENEFITS

1. Re-aligns mind/body connection with almost all the major muscle groups.
2. Warms up the back muscles for all other movements and stretches.
3. Releases tension in the lower and upper back.
4. Keeps your back muscles safe from injury and helps the muscles stay relaxed during the day and night.
5. Supports coordination and posture.
6. Releases muscles surrounding the neck and upper shoulders.
7. Re-patterns muscles along the side of the body.
8. Opens up diaphragm for deeper breathing.
9. Releases muscles surrounding the hips.
10. Re-patterns the transverse abdominal muscles.

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Cat Stretch Series—Arch and Curl*

Time: 3 minutes

Teaching Points

- Lying on your back, with your knees bent - hip width apart, both feet on the floor. Begin by tipping your pelvis so that you arch your lower back. Bring the tip of your tailbone down on the floor.
- Interlace the fingers behind your head. As you are arching your back also arch your neck and press your head gently into your hands.
- Reverse this movement and come up into a slow and controlled sit up. Curl the pelvis in the opposite direction by pressing your lower back down into the floor. You want a sensation of lengthening your lower spine.
- When you are in the "sit up" position chin is to the chest and elbows come together.
- Bring the head and elbows back down, look behind you and arch your entire back (like the shape of a bridge).
- Continue to arch and curl slowly. Try it with your eyes closed.
- Repeat 5 -10 times slowly

Modifications

You may do the arch and curl with the arms down by your side. To protect the neck do not lift the head on the curl, but you can still press the belly firmly into the floor and lengthen the spine.

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Cat Stretch Series—X's*

Time: 3 minutes, 3 times each side

Teaching Points

- Roll over onto your belly.
- Bring your left ear to the floor.
- Bend your right arm, palm facing down and slide the back of your hand under your cheek (now you are looking towards your right elbow).
- Left arm is resting by your side and keep the left shoulder on the floor relaxed.
- Keep the back of your right hand touching your left cheek. Lift your right elbow, shoulder and upper torso off the floor. Remember to keep your left shoulder and arm by your side relaxed.
- Lift your left leg (keeping it straight), leading with your heel towards the ceiling and then guide it down to the floor slowly.
- Now combine both upper and lower body movements at the same time. Just work the right upper body and the left lower body. Try to keep all other muscles that aren't necessary in the movement relaxed.... Breathe!
- Rest after every repetition. Make sure you relax your neck when your head touches the floor.
- 3 times each side

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Cat Stretch Series—X's*

Time: 3 minutes, 3 times each side

Modifications

The hand is supporting the weight of the head as you lift. If there is chronic neck pain then just lift the back leg and visualize lifting the neck and shoulder.

When lying on the belly you can also warm up the neck muscles by lifting the head and slowly turning it to the other side. Bring the head down to the floor and completely relax. Repeat several times by lifting the head and turning to the other side.

Cat Stretch Series—Side Crunch*

Time: 3 minutes, 3 times each side

Teaching Points

- Lying on your side with your knees bent keep your knees locked together and just lift the top ankle towards the ceiling. Guide it come back down.
- Cradle your top arm over your head to meet your opposite ear (your arm will be supporting the weight of your head). Leading with your top elbow, reach for the hip – like a side "sit-up" or "crunch".
- Combine both movements: Elbow reaches for the hip and the top ankle lifts towards the ceiling. Exhale on the way up (shorten your waist), Inhale on the way down (lengthen your waist).
- You can change the angle of your side crunch by aiming your elbow behind or in front of you.
- Do each side 3 times slowly.

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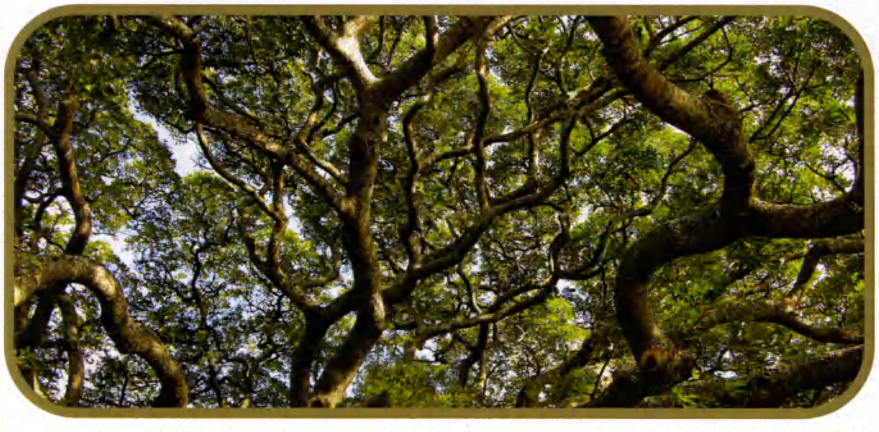
Cat Stretch Series—Arch and Curl with a Twist*

Time: 3 minutes

Teaching Points

- Like the first arch and curl, lay on your back, with your knees bent, hip width apart, feet on the floor.
- The right hand is supporting the weight of your head as you bring it up and over towards the left knee (you can reach past it if you want). Lower back presses firmly into the floor as you engage your abdominal muscles.
- Bring your torso back down, elbow touches the floor, and arch your lower back. As your head comes down the floor bring your left foot down.
- Repeat each side 5 times.
- When you are finished come into Savasana and notice how you feel.



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LIGHTHOUSE*

Time: 8 minutes

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This is an exercise sequence that will re-pattern the major muscles of the back, shoulder, neck, and hips. There are 5 sets of instructions.

With your eyes closed take your time and explore your range of movement. This is a fun somatic exploration to witness "before" and "after". By the end of the exercises you will most likely see a significant range increase. This means that the muscles in your back, neck and hips have lengthened and relaxed.

BENEFITS

1. Relieves chronic pain in muscles of the entire back, shoulders, neck, and hips.
2. Relieves eye strain and relaxes the muscles in the face.
3. Increases flexibility with the core muscles surrounding the spine.
4. Increases range of motion for twisting left and right.
5. Regains strength and efficiency of muscle coordination.
6. Improves posture.

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LIGHTHOUSE*

Time: 8 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

- Begin by sitting upright and check in with your range of motion before performing the exercise.
- Bend your right knee and bring it forward on the floor with your ankle/heel near your pelvis. Bend your left knee and bring it behind you, with your heel near your buttocks. Right hand is on the floor.
- Twist to the right and look over your right shoulder. With your eyes open pick a spot on the wall that will mark your range of motion before doing the exercise.

1ST SET: TWIST RIGHT AND LEFT

- Place your left hand on your right shoulder, with your elbow relaxed on your chest, and begin twisting to the right. Head and eyes also gaze to the right.
- As you are twisting to the right, encourage your left hip to roll forward.
- Twist to the left and look to the left.
- Move slowly and explore your range of motion.
- Repeat twisting both directions three or four times.

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LIGHTHOUSE*

Time: 8 minutes

2ND SET: HEAD LOOKS THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION OF THE TWIST

The head and torso move in opposite directions: When the torso and shoulders turn left, the head goes right. As your torso and shoulders move right, the head turns to the left.

Note: We keep the body in the same position for all 5 steps before we do the other side

3RD SET: ONLY THE EYES MOVE A DIFFERENT DIRECTION THAN THE TWIST

- Bring your left hand balanced on your chest with your finger tips touching your chin. Continue twisting left and right with the torso.
- Keep your head centered over your chest. You can do this by bringing the tips of fingers to touching your chin.
- If you are twisting to the right, your eyes will drift left.... (For most people this can be difficult to do the first few times)
- Remember, the head, torso, and shoulders should all go in the same direction. Only the eyes will be gazing in the opposite direction.

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LIGHTHOUSE*

Time: 8 minutes

4TH SET: VARIATION: HEAD TILTS AND EYE GAZE

- Hold the position when you are in the full twist to the right.
- Bring the left hand from the center of your chest (from the 3rd Set) back the right shoulder.
- Lift your head, left elbow, and shoulder up to the ceiling. The back of the body moves into an arch.
- Bring the head, elbow and shoulder and chin to chest.
- Repeat this three times.
- As a variation: When the head and upper body lifts up, the eyes gaze down. As the elbow and chin comes down to chest, the eyes gaze up.

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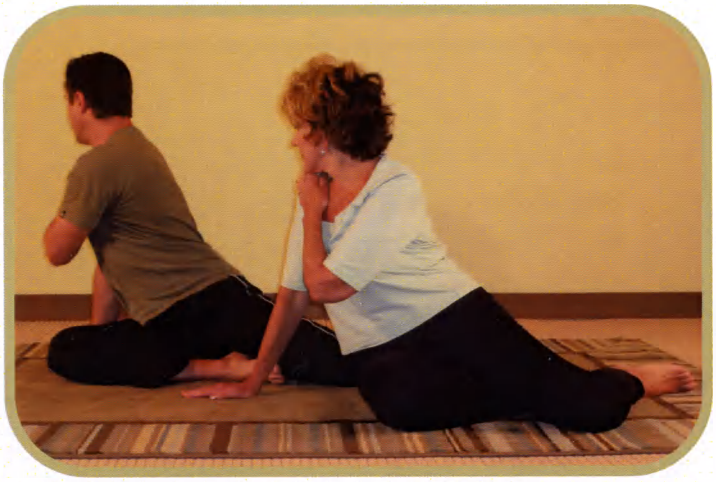
LIGHTHOUSE*

Time: 8 minutes



5TH SET: INTEGRATION

- Finish this sequence where we began in the 1st Set: The upper body, torso, head, and eyes all move in the same direction. Experience the new ease of range of motion.
- Finish by stopping the motion when the torso and shoulders are to the right. Release your left hand down to your lap. Twist to the right. Look over your shoulder and notice if you increased your range of motion?!
- Repeat these instructions for the other side.
- Finish this sequence in a seated, cross-legged position. Pause and relax for a few seconds with the eyes closed. Notice how you feel...

MODIFICATIONS

If you need to rest your hand that is on the floor, feel free to change your hand position. You can make a tripod with your fingers on the floor, or you can make a fist and lean on it instead of your fingers.

If your wrist is still hurting, then please stop and stretch the wrist and fingers.

If you get dizzy or nauseous during these movements, then you can either close your eyes or stop and take a break.

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Somatic Child's Pose

Time: 3-5 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is a traditional restorative yoga pose. It is very nurturing and relaxing. When you are in the pose let all of your thoughts go and enjoy feeling still and peaceful.

Benefits

1. Nice stretch for your lower back.
2. Overall feeling of well-being.
3. Relieves fatigue and anxiety.
4. Boosts the immune system.
5. Lowers blood pressure.
6. Relaxes all of your muscles.

Teaching Points

- Start on your hands and knees. Bring your hands right underneath your shoulders with fingers spread wide. Knees are underneath your hips, and toenails are down on the floor. Big toes touching.
- Sit back on your heels. Notice if that feels ok with your knees. If so, then bring your chest down to your knees.

Teaching Points

- Reach forward with your arms and hands out in front of you.
- Hug and grip your legs and buttocks. Squeeze those muscles for a few seconds and then slowly release them. This is where we bring Somatic principals into a traditional yoga pose.
- Try squeezing and releasing a few times. This will help your muscles let go and you will increase your range of motion.
- Bring your forehead down to the floor.
- Release mind chatter and become one with the moment. Melt into the floor. Let your chest and heart sink in-between your knees. Take some deep breaths and surrender into stillness. Open, relax, and let go!

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Somatic Child's Pose

Time: 3-5 minutes

Variation

Bring your arms down by your side and rest on one of your cheeks. After a while, change sides and rest on the other cheek.

Modifications

If you are experiencing discomfort in your knees then don't bring your hips down towards your heels. Also, you can double up your mat, or kneel on a thick blanket.

If your forehead doesn't reach the floor you can stack both your fists and rest on the top hand.

Do whatever you can to make yourself comfortable. This pose is meant to be deeply restorative.

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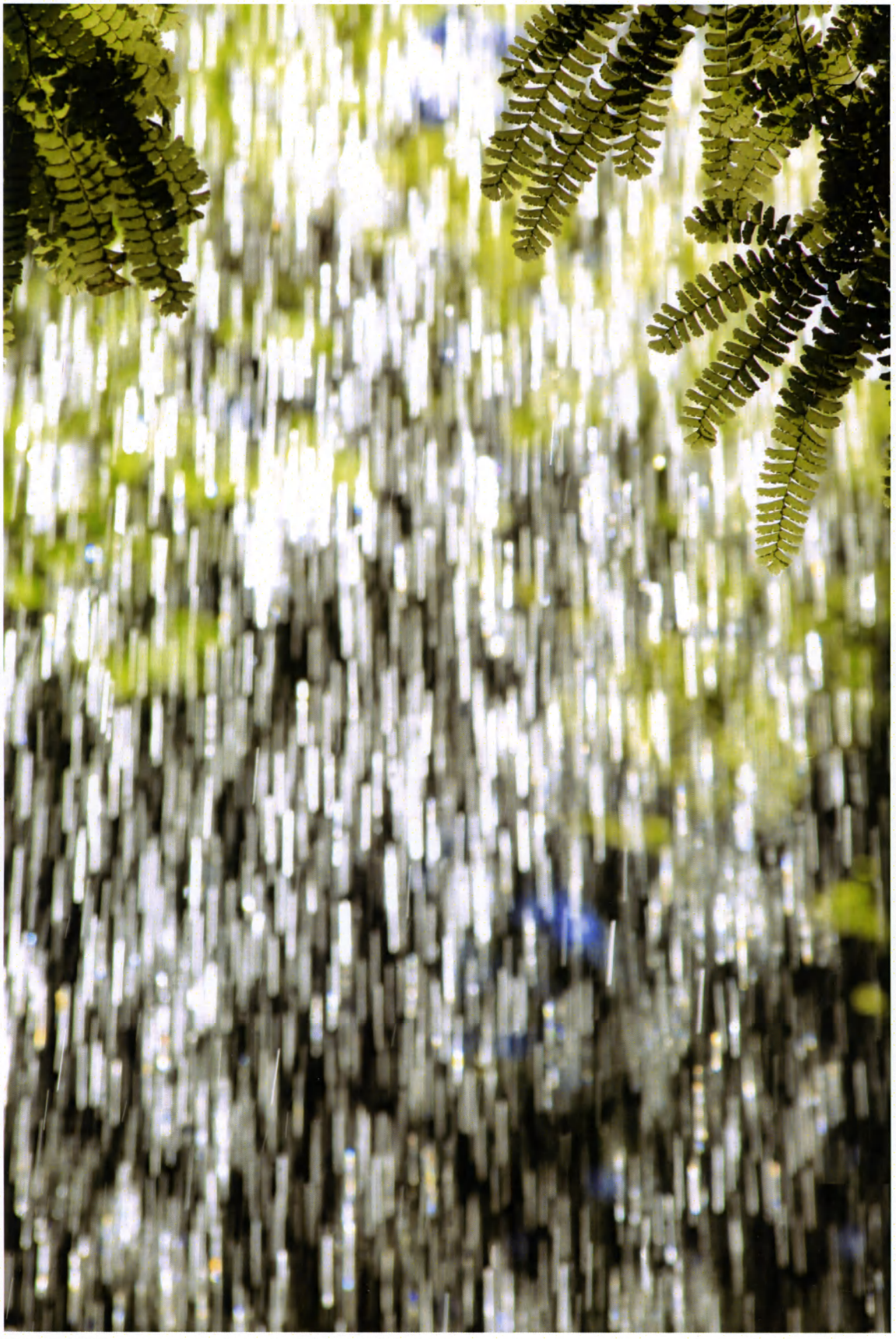

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THE COMPLETE BACK

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Moving Twists*

Time: 3 minutes

Description and Purpose

This continuous movement increases the flexibility of the muscles of your waist, abdominals, and back muscles. Habit patterns from modern living can leave these muscles short and tight which can lead to lower back pain and poor posture.

Benefits

1. Increases spinal mobility. This exercise helps to mobilize the joints of your spine by rotating each vertebra gently.
2. Increases flow of oxygenated blood into your entire system.
3. Eliminates toxins and metabolic waste products from your system. The liver, kidneys, stomach, pancreas and spleen are all believed to benefit from twisting.
4. Reduces abdominal bloating and digestive discomfort.
5. Eliminates tension from deep within your body. This exercise is restorative to your system.
6. Invigorating and helps elevate your energy levels if you are feeling tired.

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Moving Twists*

Time: 3 minutes

Teaching Points

- While lying on your back, knees and ankles touching, feet on the floor and arms out to the side -perpendicular to shoulders, drop your knees over to the left side and roll your head on the floor over to the right.
- Right palm is facing up and left palm is facing down.
- Tuck your right shoulder blade underneath you, towards the spine. To deepen the stretch you can push your right hip forward a little.
- Engage your core muscles by pushing your lower back into the floor while you lift the knees up and over to the other side. Now you are looking at your left hand, palm facing up and right palm facing down.
- Keep moving slowly, twisting from side to side. Enjoy the feeling your spine being "rinsed" – letting go of tension and stress. Notice that you get a deeper stretch along the full length of the spine when you coordinate the arm/hand movement with the hips and knees.
- Once you get the hang of it, try the movement with the eyes closed.

Modifications

Move slowly and with your eyes closed. Feel the cooperation of the upper and lower body making a graceful movement. Enjoy the renewed feeling of your spine being flexible!

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Love Your Lumbar

Time: 5 minutes

Description and Purpose

This exercise is designed to get you in contact with the individual muscles close to the lumbar spine: L1, L2, L3, L4, and L5. You are being challenged so that your brain can witness the fine tuning of control as you perform the movement. Think of it as a game of awareness.

Benefits

1. Releases tension in your lower back.
2. Creates better range of movement with your lower spine.
3. More strength to support your upper body when sitting or standing.
4. Relaxes gluteal muscles (the buttocks).

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Love Your Lumbar

Time: 5 minutes

Teaching Points

- Lying on your back, knees bent and together, feet hip width apart near the buttocks. Arms are raised with elbows bent, and hands with palms facing up near your head.
- Squeeze your knees and arch your lower back by tightening those lower muscles. Bring the tip of your tailbone to touch the floor. Allow your belly and chest to rise.
- Push down with your feet and lift your hips until you are balanced on your middle spine: As best you can keep the lower back arched.
- Gradually uncurl your lower yourself down, vertebra by vertebra. When your last vertebra touches the ground release the squeeze of your knees.
- Repeat this 4 or 5 times and rest in-between cycles.
- Make sure that you don't hold your breath.
- Play a game of awareness by focusing on each vertebra touching the floor one at a time. After the hips are lifted, come down to touch L1 only (L1 starts right as the middle of your spine begins to curve down towards your pelvis. L5 is closest to the boney part of your sacrum). Then lift back up. Next try L1 and L2 and lift back up. L1, L3, L4 and lift back up. L1, L3, L4, L5 and lift back up.
- When you are finished feel free to wrap your knees around your chest and massage your lower back on the floor.

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Beads on a Necklace

Time: 5 minutes

Description and Purpose

The back is comprised of 77 or more muscles. This exercise will help you not only release pain and tension, but you will also retain more sensory awareness with the muscles of your back. As we age most of us get stuck doing daily movements the same way; driving with the same foot, carrying the purse over the same shoulder, etc. Over time the conscious brain has difficulty registering all the different parts and pieces. This exercise helps you to regain control and flexibility over some of these muscles.

Benefits

1. Increases flexibility to the spine.
2. Helps the brain to differentiate between the different muscles of the back. When we carry stress in our muscles often the brain registers it as one big sensation.
3. Enhances your awareness of your spine and the muscles surrounding it.
4. Returns strength to your back muscles.
5. Erases pain.
6. Calms the nervous system.

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Beads on a Necklace

Time: 5 minutes

Teaching Points

- Lay on your back, knees bent with feet hip width apart. Arms are by your sides.
- Lift your hips up and keep your knees pointed forward (not falling to the sides).
- Shrug your shoulders towards your ears and then relax them as you bring the upper vertebrate (right below your neck) down one at a time... until your hips are on the floor.
- Move slowly and challenge yourself to touch one vertebrate at a time.
- Arch your lower back by bringing the tip of your tailbone down and then slowly lift the hips again. This time lift one vertebrate off the floor at time. When you get to the top, shrug your shoulders and start over again.
- Repeat this 5 – 7 times and then rest.

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INCHWORM

Time: 7 minutes

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This fun movement is definitely an exploration! At first you may not "feel" how to do it. But be patient, it will come. Think of an inchworm making its way over a leaf. It picks up its body, folds into an arch, and then reaches forward with its body.

The intent for this exercise is to start feeling how you can use your back muscles independently and in cooperation to do something you probably have never done before. The brain loves to learn new things. This sequence will bring new awareness to you and you will feel invigorated afterwards. It is a great way to move stagnant or stuck energy in the muscles of the back. Enjoy!

BENEFITS

1. Increases flexibility and coordination.
2. Releases tension in the shoulders and back.
3. Brings Prana to the muscles of the entire back.
4. Great for the central nervous system.
5. Learn something new. It will make you laugh!

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INCHWORM

Time: 7 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

- Starting position is laying on your back, knees bent, feet on the floor hip width apart, and your arms lying up by your head, elbows bent with palms facing up.
- Arch your lower back like a bridge so that you have space between you and the floor.
- Push down with your feet, and lift your hips up.
- Slide your shoulder blades underneath you and slightly down your spine. With this action you will begin to find a way to scooch forward a bit as your hips lift up.
- Bring your vertebrate down one at a time.
- When your hips are down you can flatten your lower back on the floor and this will bring you forward a little bit too. Think of a way an inch worm moves forward. It lifts its body and sets it back down again. (This takes practice... it took me a while to get used to it!)
- Hopefully you will be in another spot on your mat now. Try it again and repeat this cycle.
- Try to be childlike in your curiosity and eventually you will start to inch across the floor!

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Bowing To Your Inner Teacher

Time: 5 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is part of the restorative yoga sequence where you are continuing to train the brain to stay focused inwardly.
It is also a good movement for transition from lying to sitting.
You are warming up the hips, lower back muscles, and the muscles surrounding the spine – from the tailbone to the neck.

Benefits

1. Aids in digestion
2. Improves breathing
3. Eases back and neck tension
4. Soothes frazzled nerves
5. Increases coordination of synchronizing upper and lower body movement

Teaching Points

There are 3 repetitions for this exercise.

- While standing tall, soften your knees and roll forward towards the floor.
- Your arms will be dangling and notice where your fingers touch. Is it somewhere on your chins, or on the floor? This is the "before shot", meaning it is showing your range of motion before doing the exercise.
- Relax the muscles surrounding your neck

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Bowing To Your Inner Teacher

Time: 5 minutes

1ST Repetition

- While the neck is relaxed, start by just lifting your arms up about 12 inches.
- Keep your arms where they are, but lift your head to be more comfortable by arching your neck.

2nd Repetition

- Lift your arms again 12 inches or so.
- Keep your arms where they are, but lift your head by arching your neck.

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Bowing To Your Inner Teacher

Time: 5 minutes

3rd Repetition

- Lift your arms for the last time, 12 inches or so. By this time your arms will be about parallel to the floor. Your body will mirror an "L" shape.
- Keep your arms where they are, but lift your head again.
- From here slowly and smoothly lower your upper body towards the floor.
- You will end in a forward bend. Remember to relax the neck muscles.
- Now you can check in for the "after shot", and notice if you've increased your range of movement?
- Repeat this cycle a couple more times. You will most likely be significantly increasing your flexibility each time.
- Congratulations! You've just reprogrammed and lengthened the muscles surrounding the spine and the back of the legs.

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Snake Dance

Time: 10 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is a great sequence to feel the entire spine from head to toe. The movements are designed to have you undulating in various positions. Take your time and experience the subtle sensations within each movement. Feel the difference between the front body and the back body. The purpose is to awaken the Kundalini at the base of the spine and invite your life force to rise up your spine and awaken the higher spiritual centers.

Benefits

1. Brings flexibility to your spine
2. Releases tension and stress in your body holistically
3. Tones your muscles, front and back body
4. Expands your capacity to breath
5. Moves any blocked energy in all of the chakras
6. Enlivens your physical body and marries it with your energy body
7. Aligns Mind/Body/Spirit

Teaching Points

There are 5 Positions for this sequence.

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Snake Dance

Time: 10 minutes

1ST Position

- Sitting cross-legged and lean back on your hands.
- On an inhale pick up your hips, lead with your heart, and tilt your head slowly back. Your upper back will arch as well.
- On an exhale lean forward, let your head drop towards your chest, and round your shoulders forwards.
- Undulate back up on the in-breath.
- Undulate down on the out-breath.
- Repeat several times.

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Snake Dance

Time: 10 minutes

2nd Position

- Lying on your belly, but this time resting on your elbows.
- Inhale while you lift and arch your neck and upper back.
- Exhale while you bring your head down and tuck your chin towards your chest.
- Repeat a few times.

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Snake Dance

Time: 10 minutes

3rd Position

- Lying on your back, prop yourself up on your elbows.
- Inhale, lean your head back and lift your heart to the sky.
- Exhale, bow your head forward, round your shoulders forward, tuck your stomach a bit, and bring your chin towards your chest.
- Repeat several times.

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Snake Dance

Time: 10 minutes

4TH Position

- From a kneeling position balance on your hands and knees – your body will be like a tabletop.
- Inhale as your arch your back, slide your shoulder blades down your spine, and look up at your brow.
- Exhale as you lower your head, broaden your shoulders, bring your belly in towards the

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Snake Dance

Time: 10 minutes

5TH Position

- Kneeling and sitting back on your heels.
- Inhale, lean back, lift your heart, and raise your belly up into your diaphragm.
- Exhale, reverse the movement and bring your belly button in towards your spine, broaden and round your shoulders, and tuck your chin to your chest.
- Repeat several times.
- Finish by lying on your back, legs and arms out flat, and palms facing up: Savasana.
- Notice how you feel! See if you can notice a slight vibration right underneath the skin.

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Hula Hips

Time: 8 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is one of my favorite exercises to relax the lower back and keep it open. Often, when we are in pain in this area, our brain "feels" the lower back as one big frozen block.

By performing this movement you will re-train the brain to remember that there are many parts and pieces to this par t of the body. This is important because we want to feel safe in our body and remember that we have choices in regards to how we move (without pain!).

Benefits

1. Relieves pain in the lower back.
2. Flexibility when bending forward and/or twisting.
3. Increases range of motion.
4. Gains confidence in movement.
5. Increases sensory awareness of the lower back and your potential of movement.
6. Improves coordination.

Teaching Points

- Lie on your back, knees bent, and feet on the floor hip width apart.
- Imagine a round wall clock is resting on your belly
- Arch your lower back and bring the tip of your tailbone down into the floor. Using your imagination, think of the tip of the tailbone represents 6 o'clock.

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Hula Hips

Time: 8 minutes

Teaching Points

- Reverse the movement and flatten your back on the floor.
- Imagine the point a few inches above your navel is 12 o'clock.

Teaching Points

- Lift your right hip off the ground and that is 9 o'clock.

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Hula Hips

Time: 8 minutes

Teaching Points

- Lower your right hip back to the ground and lift your left hip. The left hip represents 3 o'clock.
- Now that you've broken the movement down into 4 points, start to make a circle and connect the points.
- Start this exercise or "Hula Dance" by arching your back and touching the 6 o'clock position.
- Now flatten your lower back but lift the left hip up – 3 o'clock.
- Keep the movement going, but now tuck your belly button down towards your spine and touch the 12 o'clock position.
- Keep rolling and lift the right hip into the 9 o'clock position.
- Keep rolling around and bring yourself back to the 6 o'clock position.
- Now keep going in one continuous movement, moving "clockwise". Intend to make the movement round and smooth. Try picking up the speed for a few rounds, and then slow it down again.
- When you feel finished, reverse the movement. Good luck! Once you get it down it feels

Helpful Tip

Another way to visualize this movement is by imagining a coin you just spun on a tabletop: the edges of the coin would roll around into a circle before ending up flat on the table. Your intention is to find cooperation with all of your lower back muscles and find the edges, like the coin, and massage those on the floor in one continuous movement.

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Advanced Low Back and 'QL' Release*

Time: 10 minutes

Description and Purpose

Much like Hula Hips, this is another highly effective exercise to release tight lower back from tension.

This is an advanced movement. If you have a history of chronic low back pain, please move into this exploration slowly and gently. You can start with less movement and build up to more

Benefits

1. Relieves pain in the lower back: specifically the Quadratus Lumborum.
2. Improves flexibility when bending forward and/or twisting.
3. Increases range of motion.
4. Gains confidence in movement and in posture.
5. Increases sensory awareness of the lower back and your potential of movement.
6. Improves coordination.

Teaching Points

There are 5 parts to this exercise.

1st Part - Hip up, Hip down

- While lying on your back, knees bent hip width apart, feet on the floor. Lift the right hip towards the ceiling and then guide it back to the floor slowly and smoothly. Make sure the rest of your body is relaxed as you perform this movement.
- When your hip touches the floor pause for a moment and then start again.
- Repeat 3 or four times.

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Advanced Low Back and 'QL' Release*

Time: 10 minutes

2nd Part - Shoulder Tuck

- First, raise the right hip and then second push the right shoulder down and tuck it towards the spine. The right side of your back will come into an arch.
- Slowly lower the hip and release the shoulder at the same time.
- Repeat 3 times.

3rd Part - Knees Squeezing

- Raise the right hip, push the right shoulder down and pull it in towards the spine, and then squeeze both of your knees together. Notice the slight contraction in the lower back now.
- Slowly release everything at once and return back to neutral and let every body part relax. Rest between each repetition.
- Repeat 3 times.

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Advanced Low Back and 'QL' Release*

Time: 10 minutes

4TH Part - Integration

- Combine all three movements you did in Set #1, #2 and #3 but this time make it one movement. In other words have your entire body contract and move all at once, and then release it slowly.
- Repeat 3 times.

5TH Part - Hip Rolls

- Go back to breaking each movement down in each individual set: Set # 1, 2, and 3, but now you are going to add on to it after you squeeze your knees together.
- After the legs squeeze together, lift both hips off the ground.
- Slowly bring the right hip down first, followed by the left hip.
- Hips will be "rolling in the air". The rest of the body starts to relax as the hips are coming down.
- Repeat 3 times and rest between each repetition. Take your time.
- Repeat all 5 Set's on the other side.

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Advanced Low Back and 'QL' Release*

Time: 10 minutes

- When finished with both sides, pick up both of the knees and hug them in towards the chest. Massage the lower back on the floor by moving clockwise.
- After going both directions bring the legs down flat on the floor (or bend the knees and rest your feet on the floor hip width a part) and relax the entire body. How do you feel? What are the sensations?

Modifications

This is a very advanced movement. Please be mindful of your limitations as you perform this exercise, especially if you have had a history of chronic pain in the low back area. If you have stored a lot of lactic acid from contracted muscles, you may be sore for a couple of days after. If so, please modify next time by using less effort and 'feathering' into the tight areas. If you feel pain at any time, please stop the movement.

Remember, the benefits of these exercises are cumulative, so even a small movement can lead to great success later. Be gentle with yourself and enjoy the process of building awareness with your body from the inside out!

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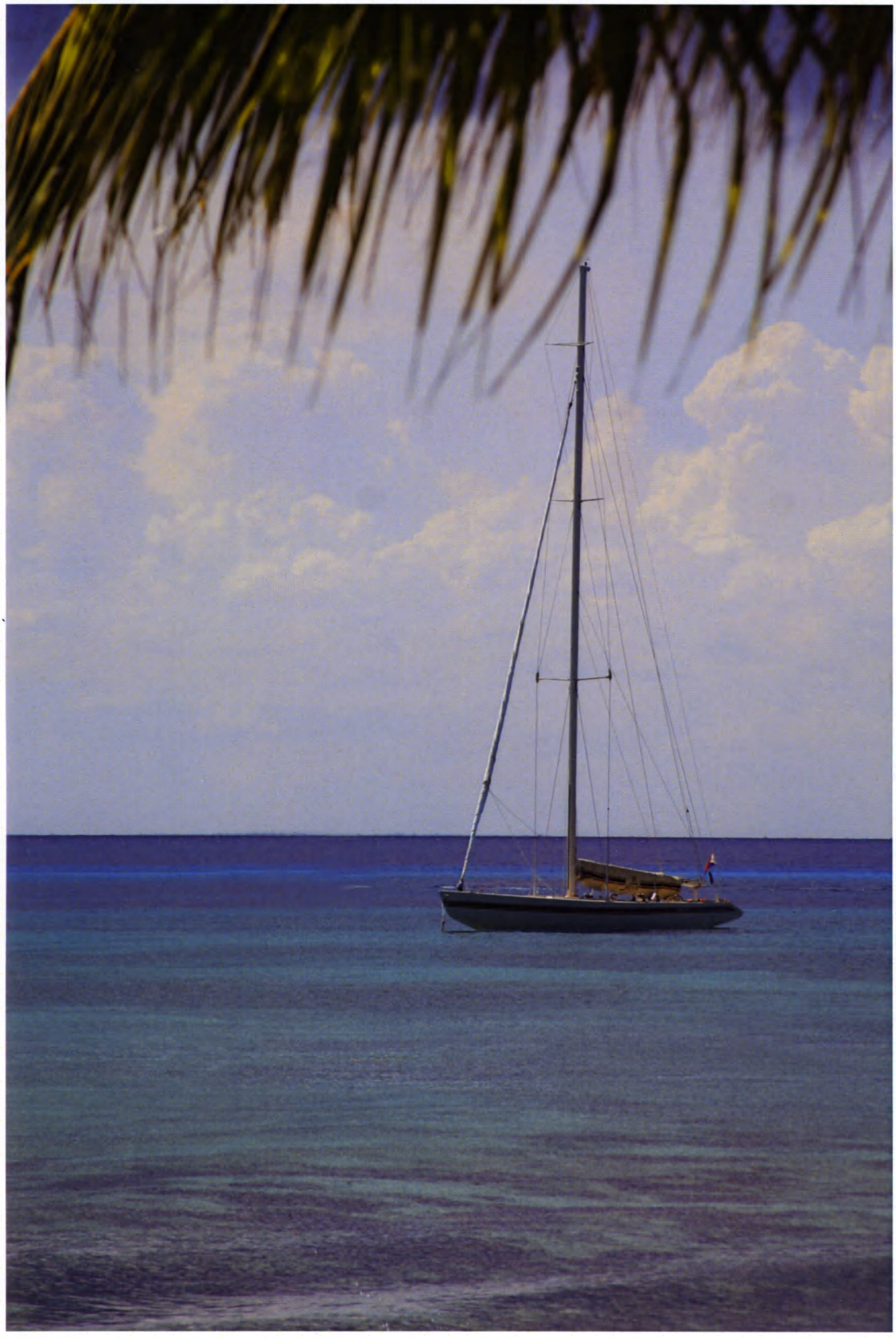

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Hips, Legs, Knees, and Feet

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Hip and Leg Release: Modified Pigeon*

Time: 10 minutes

Description and Purpose

This exercise sequence takes a traditional yoga asana and adds Somatic Exploration principles. It is a great posture sequence to stretch the muscles surrounding the hips and legs.

Move into pose step by step and choose which option is best for you that day.

Start by rolling off to one side while resting on your elbows. Slowly contract and release your leg muscles as you move deeper into this leg stretch and hip opener.

Benefits

1. Stretches the hip rotators (the buttocks area) and the hip flexors (the muscles that run along the front of your thighs and pelvis). This can help with a myriad of problems, including pain associated with the low back.
2. Increases range of motion and flexibility of the psoas muscle.
3. Can alleviate problems or pain in the sciatic nerve leading to a condition known as sciatica.
4. Calms the mind.
5. Slows the heart rate through slow and deep breaths.

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Hip and Leg Release: Modified Pigeon*

Time: 10 minutes

Teaching Points

- Start on all fours and do Cat/Cow a few times. Arch and raise your head during an inhale. Round your shoulders, and tuck your chin during the exhale.

1st Option: Lean to the Side

- After finished with Cat/Cow bring your spine back to neutral and then guide the right knee towards the left wrist and set it down.
- Tuck your right foot underneath you and toward the left side of the mat.
- Extend the right leg behind you on the floor, toenails facing down.
- Lean over onto the right buttock and rest on your elbows. Neck and shoulders are relaxed. Feel the stretch in your legs, hips and buttocks.

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Hip and Leg Release: Modified Pigeon*

Time: 10 minutes

2nd Option: Square Hips over Bottom Leg

- If option #1 was easy for you then keep extending back through the right leg and square your hips over the left leg.
- Extend your arms and rest here, or you can lean on your elbows. Neck and jaw are relaxed.

3rd Option: Forehead to the Floor

- If option #2 was easy, then extend the right leg even further and bring your arms forward. Reach with your arms and hands in front of you. Bring your forehead to the floor. You can also make fists with your hands and stack them so that you can rest your forehead on them.
- Over time keep intending to bring your left foot to be parallel with the front of your mat. You will feel the sensation of a deep stretch in the front and back of the legs.

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Hip and Leg Release: Modified Pigeon*

Time: 10 minutes

Teaching Points

To make this a Somatic Exploration, no matter what option you've chosen, back off from the stretch a little bit and contract both legs: front, back and into the buttocks. Slowly release the contraction and drop deeper into the stretch. Pause, and then do it again... up to three cycles total. Notice that you can go deeper, more easily, after contracting and releasing your muscles.

- After you are finished with the left leg forward, back out of the pose and come back to hands and knees. Extend the left leg behind you and open the left hip.
- Repeat the sequence with the right leg.
- After you are finished with both sides, transition back to a seated position with the legs crossed. Pause, close your eyes and notice how you feel.

Modifications

If knee issues are present, then it is extra important to back off if you are feeling discomfort. It isn't important how far you bend forward; it is important that you learn and honor your limits and meet your body wherever it is at. Sometimes less is more.

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Seated Bound Angle
Supta Baddha Konasana*

Time: 5 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is a traditional yoga pose that adds Somatic Exploration principles. You will be surprised how much more range of motion in your hips and inner thighs you'll get by squeezing and releasing the muscles systematically. Try this cycle several times.

Benefits

1. Stimulates abdominal organs, ovaries and prostate gland, bladder, and kidneys.
2. Stimulates the heart and improves general circulation.
3. Stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knees.
4. Helps relieve mild depression, anxiety, and fatigue.
5. Soothes menstrual discomfort and sciatica.
6. Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause.
7. Therapeutic for flat feet, high blood pressure, infertility, and asthma.
8. Consistent practice of this pose until late into pregnancy is said to help ease childbirth.
9. Traditional texts say that Supta Baddha Konasana destroys disease and diminishes fatigue.

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Seated Bound Angle
Supta Baddha Konasana*

Time: 5 minutes

Teaching Points

- From a seated position open your knees and bring the soles of your feet together.
- Hold onto your ankles and press your elbows into your knees.
- Press your knees into your elbows and your elbows into your knees. Your intention for doing this is to give your brain feedback from your muscles. You will feel your inner thighs contracting.
- Keeping a slight contraction in the inner thigh, slowly release the pressure you are applying from your elbows and slowly release the knees towards the floor. Lead with your heart and lean forward with a flat back – even if it is only a few inches. Honor your body. Come to a position where you feel a deep stretch in the inner thigh and relax into it. In yoga we call this "finding your edge".
- When you have found your edge, relax your neck and let your head bow forward.
- Repeat this sequence three times. Notice how you might be able to bend forward a few more inches after each repetition! Remember not to push too far because you don't want your muscles to recoil when you release them.

Modifications

If you have extra tight hips and inner thighs, then the movement will be very small. This is ok. Honor where you are. Do not push. At some point let go of the effort and explore your sensations in this position passively.

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Hip, Leg, and Knee Release—Swimming Frog*

Tiime: 10 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is a Somatic Exploration sequence designed for the hips and lower extremities. This is an excellent sequence for anyone who frequently practices yoga, walking, hiking, or biking.

Benefits

1. Lengthens and re-patterns the muscles surrounding the hips and inner/outer thigh.
2. Increases mobility for the joints of the leg and knee.
3. Improves range of motion.
4. Balancing for the hips: Right and left leg can return to equal length.
5. Regains confidence and coordination with walking.

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Hip, Leg, and Knee Release—Swimming Frog*

Tiime: 10 minutes

Teaching Points

There are 4 sets of instructions for this sequence.

1st Set - Heel sliding in towards pelvis

- While lying flat, bend the right knee and slide the right heel on the floor towards the pelvis (you are tracing the inside of the left leg with your right heel).
- Without pausing, slide the right heel until the leg is straight and then let go of all muscle contraction.
- Repeat this for three repetitions total.
- After resting for a few seconds continue to work with the right leg and move into Set #2.

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Hip, Leg, and Knee Release—Swimming Frog*

Tiime: 10 minutes

2ND Set - Heel sliding in towards hip

- Bend your right knee and slide your right heel a quarter turn towards the right hip (You are performing the exact opposite movement in contrast to instruction #1).
- Roll your head on the floor to the right, as if you are trying to look at the sole of your right foot.
- Slide the right heel back and the leg returns to a straight position.
- Also bring the head back to a neutral position and let go of all muscle contraction between each repetition.
- Repeat this movement three times.
- When you are finished, lay flat with your arms by yours sides, legs straight, and your ankles flopped open (release the muscles of your inner thighs) and notice if you feel a difference in your legs and hips between the left and right sides.
- Now repeat Instructions from Set # 1 and #2 using your left leg.
- When you are finished with the left leg pause and rest with your eyes closed. Notice how

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Hip, Leg, and Knee Release—Swimming Frog*

Tiime: 10 minutes

3RD Set - Frog Swimming

- Combine both legs to make one movement. Start with both legs straight and then bend both knees, sliding the heels on the floor with the soles of feet touching, towards the pelvis.
- Once your feet are at the pelvis, then slide your heels back again – legs straight.
- Take a few deep breaths and let go of all muscle contraction. Relax both legs and then begin again.
- Repeat this cycle three times total.
- When finished, relax your legs and scan your body for a few seconds.

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Hip, Leg, and Knee Release—Swimming Frog*

Tiime: 10 minutes

4TH Set - Skiing

- Starting with both legs straight, bring your knees and ankles to touch.
- Bend both knees to the right and slide both heels over towards your left hip (a quarter turn).
- Roll your head on the floor to the left, as if you could look at the soles of your feet.
- Slide the heels back and straighten your legs.
- The head returns back to a neutral position, and then slide your heels towards the right hip. Head rolls right.
- Return back to legs straight and repeat this movement, sliding heels left and then right several times. It is one continuous movement.
- Bring heels to each hip for three times total.
- When finished, straighten out your legs and relax everything! Let go all of the instructions and enjoy the benefits of your efforts!

Modifications

It is easier to perform this sequence on a smooth, easy gliding surface, for example hardwood floors with socks on.

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Zip Line

Tiime: 7 minutes

Description and Purpose

This exploration is for the legs, hips, knees and ankles. When you are performing this movement I encourage you to use this time as a meditation. Feel the cooperation from all your muscles. Doing this exercise in a seated position helps the brain to engage and release old habit patterns of holding in the lower extremities.

Benefits

1. Increases range of motion and flexibility of the hips, legs, knees, and ankles.
2. Reduces inflammation in the joints.
3. Eliminates pain.
4. Returns strength and coordination.

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Zip Line

Tiime: 7 minutes

Teaching Points

There are 3 sets of instructions.

1st Set Knee Lifts

- Starting position: Sitting. Bring your right leg in front of you with your knee bent and place your right near the top of the left leg. Bend your left knee and bring your left foot behind you. The right hand is on the floor next to you for support.
- Place your left hand on top of the inside of the right knee.
- Lift the right knee and apply gentle pressure with your right hand. As you press gently down on your knee, resist slightly with the right leg and lower it down slowly. This movement is giving feedback to the brain and is part of the re-education.
- Once the knee touches the floor, then relax everything. Keep both hips on the floor as best you can.
- Repeat three times.
- When you are finished, place your left hand underneath your right knee and push your right knee into the ground. At the same time your hand is "trying" to lift your knee, but you won't because the leg is stronger. Let it win. This is called a "lock in".

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Zip Line

Tiime: 7 minutes

2ND Set - Ankle Lifts

- Next position: Place your left hand on top of your left heel.
- Lift the heel of that foot by pressing the side of the big toe into the ground. While you are lifting the heel apply light pressure with your left hand.
- Resist slightly as you lower the heel to the floor.
- Repeat three times.
- Lock in: When you are finished, place your left hand underneath your left heel and push your heel into the ground. At the same time your hand is "trying" to lift your heel, but your leg is stronger and won't let you.

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Zip Line

Tiime: 7 minutes

3RD Set – Toes Tap

- Now flex and straighten your ankle several times while tapping your big toe on the floor. Your left hand is applying light pressure on the ankle as you flex your ankle back and forth.
- Switch legs and repeat sequence.
- Feel free to take a break and stretch out the wrist that you have been leaning on to prop you up. Also, relax the rest of your body while you are doing this sequence. Breathe!

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Ferris Wheel

Tiime: 7 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is one of the more playful Somatic Explorations! You can't stay too serious when you are trying to figure out how to spin in a circle. It is good for your mind/body to explore how to move in a non-traditional way. The brain loves to learn something new!

Benefits

1. Improves coordination.
2. Improves balance.
3. Massages the Gluteal muscles... releases any stored tension
4. Increases flexibility for the inner thighs and hips
5. Good for the ego to not take yourself so seriously!

Teaching Points

- Starting position. Sitting. Open your knees and bring the soles of your feet together.
- Hold onto your ankles and rest your elbows into your knees.
- Begin with a rocking motion by leaning left and right. Encourage an organic movement to happen.
- Use your intention to start turning in a circle as you are rocking. Be playful! This movement takes coordination, balance and spontaneity! It also massages your gluteus maximus muscles (yes, that is right... your butt muscles!).

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Ferris Wheel

Tiime: 7 minutes

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The Hurdle

Tiime: 8 minutes

Description and Purpose

If you have tight hamstrings, then this exercise is meant for you. This somatic exploration is designed to help you re-educate your hamstrings and increase your flexibility. Your hips will also open.

Benefits

Increases range of motion and flexibility of the hamstrings, hips, and back muscles.

Teaching Points

- Starting position. Sitting. Start with your right leg bent and flopped to the side. Your left leg is straight and on the floor.
- Reach for your left foot with both hands and wrap your fingers around the foot.
- Bend your left leg as much as you need too. Notice how flexible (or not!) you are. No judgment. ☺ It is good to have a before and after awareness here.

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THE HURDLE

Tiime: 8 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

- Holding onto your left foot firmly, gently push with your left leg so that your arms and shoulders stretch forward too. Your arms are pulling back on the foot so that your leg doesn't stretch out right away. This is giving more feedback to your brain for re-education. In other words, the pulling motion of your hands and arms are giving something for the back of your leg to resist and then ultimately release. Move slowly.
- Make sure your neck is relaxed with your chin towards your chest. Push until you are **at your "edge" *without a lot of strain*. Remember the feathering technique (refer to the Tips and Guidelines page in this book).**

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The Hurdle

Tiime: 8 minutes

Teaching Points

- Back off, sit up tall, bring your right knee into your chest and give it a squeeze. If you need more of a break before going on to the other leg, try coming into Child's Pose.
- If you have time you might like to stand up and walk around. Notice if you feel the difference between each leg.
- Repeat this sequence several times. Notice if you gain more flexibility with each set.
- Now do the same sequence with the other leg. Good job!

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Somatic Seated Forward Bend

Tiime: 8 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is a wonderful Somatic Exploration to re-pattern the hamstrings, calves, and lower back. Read the instructions carefully so that you may experience the benefits of resetting the length of those muscles.

Benefit

Increased range of motion and flexibility of the back, hips, hamstrings, hips, and calf muscles.

Teaching Points

- Starting position: Sitting tall with both legs stretched out in front of you. Place your hands, palms facing down with your fingers stretched out and pointed towards your toes. Straighten your arms so that your elbows are softly locked. Push your palms into the floor. Your back should be erect and leading with your heart forward.
- Squeeze the back of the legs; flex the ankles and toes towards the forehead. Hold for a few seconds and then release the effort.
- Repeat this several times.

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Somatic Seated Forward Bend

Tiime: 8 minutes

Teaching Points

- Next, change your position slightly so that your elbows and forearms are pushing against the lower part of your leg. In this position, stretch your spine long and lead with the heart.
- Squeeze the back of your legs; flex your ankles and toes towards your forehead. Hold for a few seconds and then release the effort.
- Repeat several times.

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Somatic Seated Forward Bend

Tiime: 8 minutes

Teaching Points

- When you feel finished, then bend forward, chin to chest, round your shoulders, and make sure your neck is relaxed. Move into a forward bend without resistance. Relax and breathe!
- Repeat with the other leg.
- When you are finished, enliven your body by tapping. Start at your chins and then work your way up to the top of your head. You will feel great afterwards. Lay back and enjoy the benefits of your efforts!

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The 'V' Swing

Tiime: 4 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is another fun somatic exploration. The target muscles are the hamstrings, glutes, and calves. You will also find a nice opening in the hips. Make it organic. Close your eyes and feel the spiral motion originating from the first chakra and moving up to the crown. Imagine the Kundalini rising and opening the higher spiritual centers.

Benefits

1. Increases range of motion and flexibility of the hamstrings, pelvis, and calf muscles.
2. Awareness of your energy body.
3. Awareness of your breath and using it as a vehicle to move your body.

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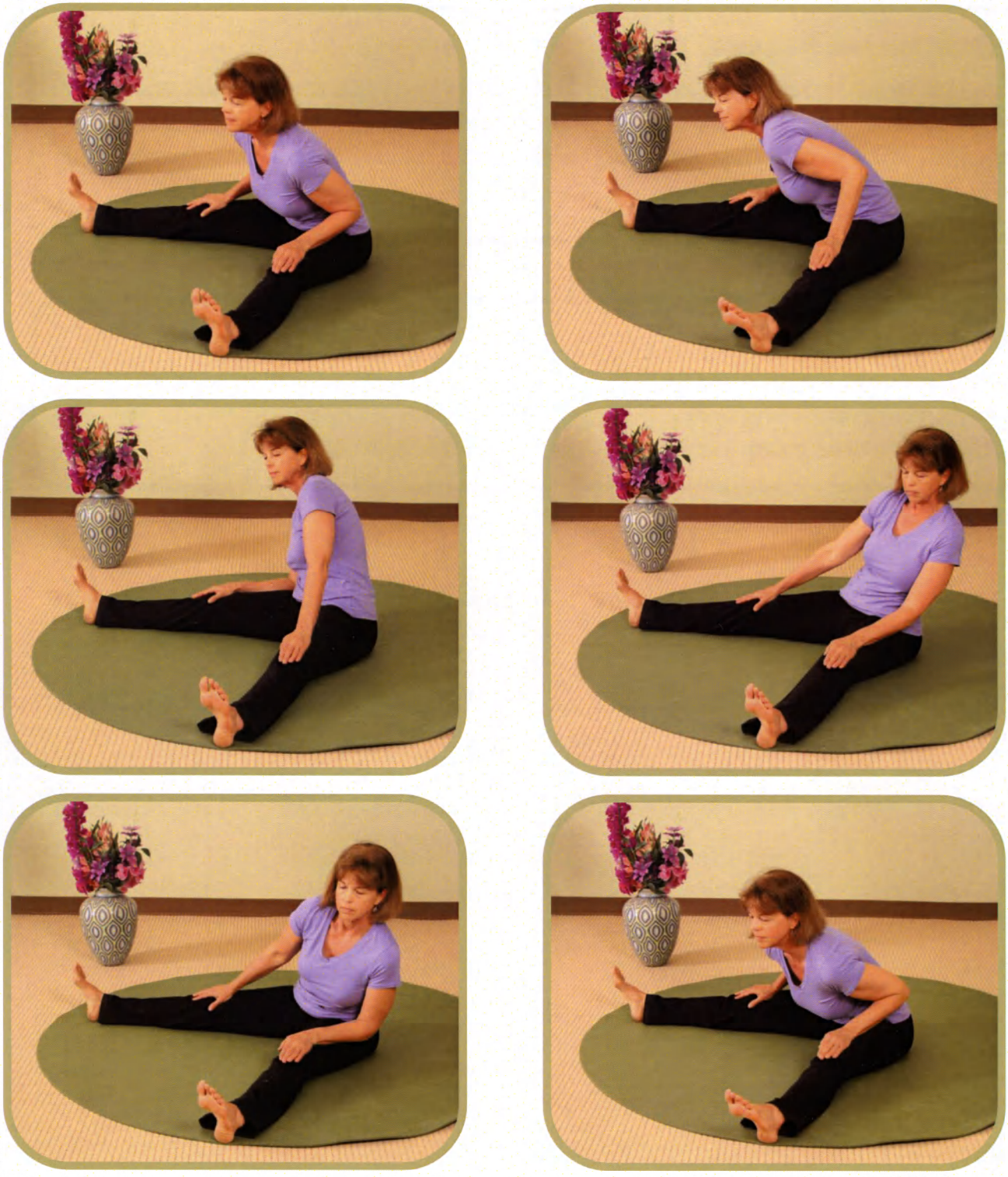
THE 'V' SWING

Tiime: 4 minutes



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The 'V' Swing

Tiime: 4 minutes

Teaching Points

- Starting position: Sitting. Legs are straight out in front of you and spread into a "V" shape. Hands are on the knees.
- Take a deep breath in and lean forward towards your left leg.
- As you exhale begin to swing over towards your right leg.
- Inhale as you swing back to center.
- Keep moving in a circle and exhale over to the left leg... and so on.
- The goal is to make it one continuous circular movement and have it synchronized with your breath. If you can't slow the breath down, then just focus on the movement. Make is slow, round, and smooth.
- Repeat this for a few rounds, or until you feel finished, and then pause.
- Now reverse the movement. Start with exhaling and rolling towards the right leg. Remember to keep your neck and jaw relaxed. Keep rolling up to the center with an extra big breath.
- The key is to move slowly and feel the back of your legs and hips. Experiment contracting and releasing the legs as you roll. Along with this, you can flex your ankles and bring your toes back, and then release for a more effective stretch.

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TFL Release

Tiime: 4 minutes

Description and Purpose

The tensor fasciae latae, otherwise known as the TFL, is the muscle that runs from your hip down to your knee. This can get very tight on people, especially men and athletes. This is a very effective way to lengthen and relax this muscle. You are using gravity and the weight of your own leg to reeducate mind to muscle.

Benefits

1. Relieves tight TFL and iliotibial band (aka: the IT band).
2. Helps stabilize and steady the hip and knee.
3. Regain strength.

Teaching Points

- Starting position: Lying on your side. Begin by lying on your right side, bottom knee bent at a right angle from your hip. This will give you support for the exercise. Your head can rest on your bottom shoulder. Top arm can be resting on the floor in front of you. Extend your left leg straight.
- Lift your left leg and bring it forward. Pick an angle to stop (you will change the angle each time) and slowly lower the leg to the floor.

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TFL Release

Tiime: 4 minutes

Teaching Points

- When your leg is down, let go of the contraction, pause for a breath and then return the left leg back to where you started: with your left leg straight and long.
- Repeat this movement several times, but each time choose a different height and angle to lower your leg to the floor.

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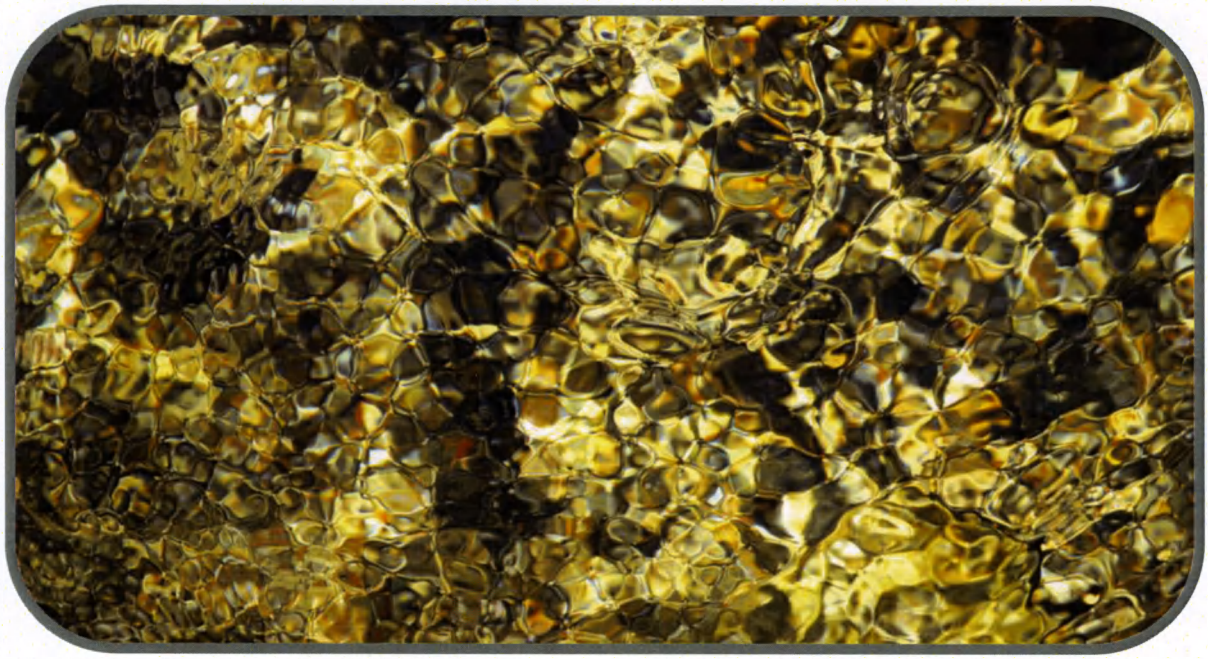
TFL Release

Tiime: 4 minutes

Teaching Points

- You might like to choose to point your left toes up, or down, while lowering your leg to the floor. By doing this you will re-pattern a different part of your leg.
- Please don't work to complete exhaustion. Move on to the other side when you feel complete.



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Achilles Tendon Heaven

Tiime: 3 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is much like a stretch you have probably practiced in the past. We are adding a somatic approach by engaging the toes and moving slowly and smoothly. The effect is that your calf muscles will lengthen and your Achilles tendon will have less strain on the attachment to the heel.

Benefits

1. Relieves pain in tight calf muscles.
2. Eases standing or walking.
3. Return of energy and strength to the legs.
4. Reduces inflammation if you have plantar fasciitis.

Teaching Points

- Starting position: Standing
- Find a wall and bring your right shoulder close to it and scissor your legs: Left leg is in front and right leg is in behind you two feet.
- Bend your front leg and raise your back heel. Grip with your toes of the right foot.
- Resist slightly (control the movement) as you lower your back heel to the floor.
- When the foot is back on the floor soften it and wiggle your toes.
- After a few times you can try the variation of turning your back heel in or out as you raise it off the ground.
- After you feel finished with that leg, walk around a bit and feel the sensations.
- Now switch to the other leg.

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Ankle and Toe Stretch

Tiime: 8 minutes

Description and Purpose

This is an interesting somatic exploration for the feet and toes. At first it may not feel like you are doing much, but when you finish you should feel a big difference in your awareness of how you are connecting to the ground.

Benefits

1. Relaxes the toes, ball of the foot, and ankle.
2. Feel more balanced and grounded.
3. Connects with the rest of your body in a relaxed way (I know this sounds strange, but my mood is always lifted after doing this exploration... even if I was already in a good mood... it got better!).
4. Relieves Plantar fasciitis.

Teaching Points

- Starting position: Standing. You can do this exploration while balancing, or you can lean against a wall.
- Begin by balancing on the left leg.

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Ankle and Toe Stretch

Tiime: 8 minutes

Teaching Points

- Lift your right foot and rub the left inner foot with your toe big toe and heel, under the ankle with a forward and backward motion.
- After a while rest and return to standing on both feet. Feel free to wiggle your toes or move around.

Teaching Points

- Next, lift your right foot and rub your big toe and heel in an upward and downward motion in back of the ankle and up the back of the calf.
- After a while rest and return to standing.

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Ankle and Toe Stretch

Tiime: 8 minutes

Teaching Points

- Next, lift your right foot and rub with the sole of your foot on top of the left foot. Rub back and forth from front to back.
- After a while rest and return to standing on both feet.

Teaching Points

- Lastly, lift your left foot and bring it to the outside of your right foot. Rub the pinky side of the right foot against the outside of the left foot. Do this with a forward and backward motion.
- When you are finished, walk around and notice how your feet feel?
- Now repeat the same sequence with the other leg.

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CATWALK

Tiime: 3 minutes

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

The tensor fasciae latae, otherwise known as the TFL, is the muscle that runs from your hip down to your knee. This can get very tight on people, especially men and athletes. This is a very effective way to lengthen and relax this muscle. You are using gravity and the weight of your own leg to reeducate mind to muscle.

BENEFITS

1. Creating a conscious connection between upper and lower body.
2. Increasing your range of movement with your transverse abdominals.
3. Great for digestion.
4. Coordination and balance.

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CATWALK

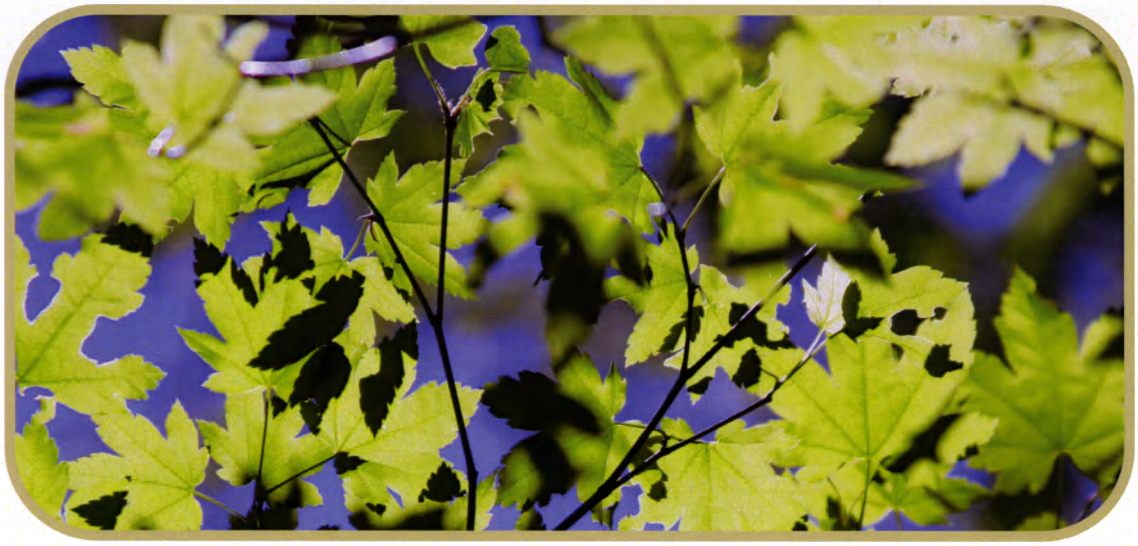
Tiime: 3 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

- Starting position: Lying on your right side with your knees bent at right angles to your hips.
- Bring your left hip back and your left shoulder forward.
- Reverse and bring your left hip forward and your left shoulder back.
- Make it one continuous movement and hold intention to synchronize the movement.
- Close your eyes and feel the balance of the hip forward and the shoulder back.
- Change the speed of repetition and make sure that you are staying balanced.
- After a while, change sides.

TIP

My students usually want to power through this exploration, often they are not in synch. Please take your time and "feel" the movement.



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INTEGRATION

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INTEGRATION: FLAMINGO*

Time: 4 minutes each side

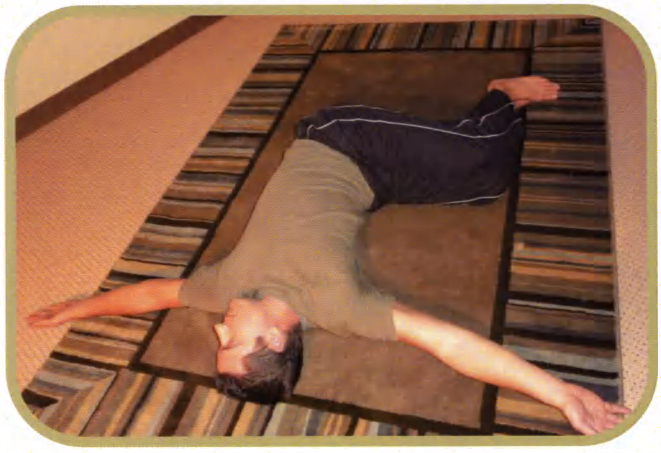
DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This Somatic Exploration exercise is wonderful for the entire body from head to toe. I often kid my students that it is almost as good as getting a massage because you will feel rejuvenated after performing this exercise.

Take the time to enjoy the pleasant sensations as you reach and stretch. In this exercise you're rolling on the floor in a moving twist. The head rolls on the ground and follows the top arm as you move left and right. Bottom leg and arm are stationary. Enjoy!

BENEFITS

1. Full body stretch and integration.
2. Coordination between many muscles throughout the body.
3. Relaxation: This is intended to be a "feel good" exercise.
4. Flexibility of the muscles surrounding the spine, front and back body.



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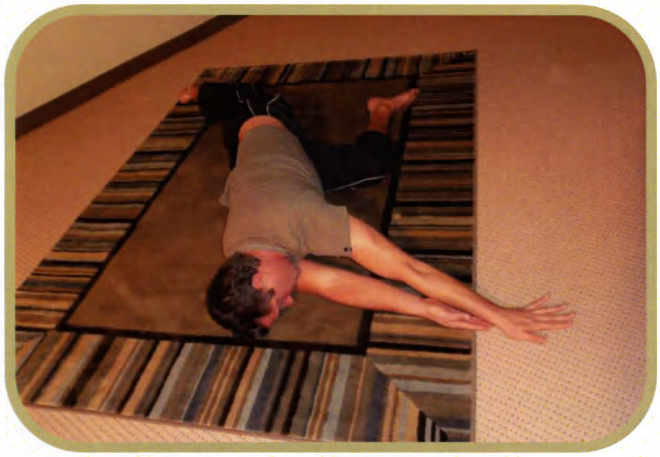
INTEGRATION: FLAMINGO*

Time: 4 minutes each side

TEACHING POINTS

- Lying on your back, bring your knees to the chest, give them a squeeze and then guide them over to the right side. Knees are bent at right angles to the hips, and the ankles are right angles to your knees. Arms are stretched out wide, perpendicular to the shoulders, lying on the floor, palms facing up. Turn your head looking over to your left hand.
- Lift your left arm and hand up toward the ceiling. Keep rolling your left arm, like you are tracing a rainbow, over to meet your right arm.
- Bring your hands to touch, but then reach past your bottom hand and roll your chest towards the floor. The forehead will roll on the ground too.



- At the same time your arm is reaching, straighten your left leg and bring your left big toe on the floor behind you. You will feel a nice, big stretch... like the whole body is "yawning".

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INTEGRATION: FLAMINGO*

Time: 4 minutes each side

- Keep your right knee and right arm on the floor, however lift your left arm back up towards the ceiling and over to the floor (this was the position of the body when you first started). The head rolls on the floor, following the direction of the left arm.
- At the same time the left arm is lifting, bring your right knee towards the chest and lower towards the floor. You are now in a deeper twist.
- Continue this sequence in a slow continuous movement. Close your eyes and take your time. Enjoy feeling the deep full body stretch.
- Repeat this movement many times and then start your twist from the other side.
- When you are finished, lay down, smooth out your clothing, and melt into the floor. Notice how you feel.
- Good iob! Rest and relax!

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Integration: Advanced Arch and Curl*

Time: 3 minutes

Description and Purpose

I always like to bookend my Somatic Exploration routine with arches and curls because these movements harmonize front and back, and top to bottom. The instructions for this advanced version include more detail with the feet against the floor (pushing down when you flatten the belly and tugging during the curl). This gives more feedback to the brain and emphasizes new re-patterning to relieve the lower back from discomfort.

This simple exercise engages the core muscles and insures that your lower back will remain open and relaxed after your practice.

Benefits

1. Re-aligns mind/body connection with almost all the major muscle groups.
2. Warms up the back muscles for all other movements and stretches.
3. Releases tension in the lower and upper back.
4. Keeps your back muscles safe from injury and helps the muscles stay relaxed during the day and night.
5. Supports coordination and posture.
6. Releases muscles surrounding the neck and upper shoulders.

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INTEGRATION: ADVANCED ARCH AND CURL*

Time: 3 minutes

TEACHING POINTS

- Lying on your back, knees bent feet hip width apart, fingers interlaced behind the head. The detail for this movement will be your feet. Bring your awareness there now.
- With your feet firmly planted on the floor (don't move their position for the entire exercise), press down and tug your heels towards your buttocks. Notice how this slight movement automatically creates an arch in the lower back.
- Keeping the feet firmly in place, push the balls of your feet away from you and curl your pelvis towards your solar plexus (the bottom of your ribs and above your belly button). Notice how this motion accentuates flattening the lower back. The goal is to make the lower spine nice and long.

- Return back to arching the back but add the upper body movement too. While pushing your heels down and tugging them towards your pelvis, arch your entire back. Push your elbows back, arch the neck, and tilt the chin back.

- Reverse the movement by pushing the balls of the feet away from the body, lift your head, tuck your chin and bring the elbows closer together. You will be in a sit up position with the lower back pushing into the floor.
- Repeat this 5 - 10 times and then pause with a deep breath, bring your arms and legs back down, and relax.

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Body Yawn*

Time: 5 minutes or more

Description and Purpose

This is a quick and easy way to release tension in your lower back. It also feels good to stretch and feel your side body.

Benefits

1. Integration and healing for mind/body/soul.
2. Relieves lower back pain.
3. Increases capacity to breathe deeper.
4. Switch into parasympathetic nervous system dominance.
5. Preparation for meditation and continuing to self-reference from the inside.

Teaching Points

There are 4 parts to this sequence.

1st Part: Knees lean

- Starting position: Lying on your back. Start with your knees bent, feet on the floor, hip width apart.
- Cross your left leg over your right and lift your left arm above your head with your elbow bent. Your right arm is resting along your side.
- Guide your legs over to the right side until they stop naturally. Feel free to tip your right hip forward for a deeper stretch.

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Body Yawn*

Time: 5 minutes or more

2nd PART – Hand Reaches

- When the legs are to the right, reach with your left hand above your head on the floor. Feel a nice deep stretch down your left side. Take a deep breath in and feel your stretch deepening.

3rd PART – Arm Relaxes

Release the stretch of the left arm but keep it above your head, resting on the floor, palm facing up.

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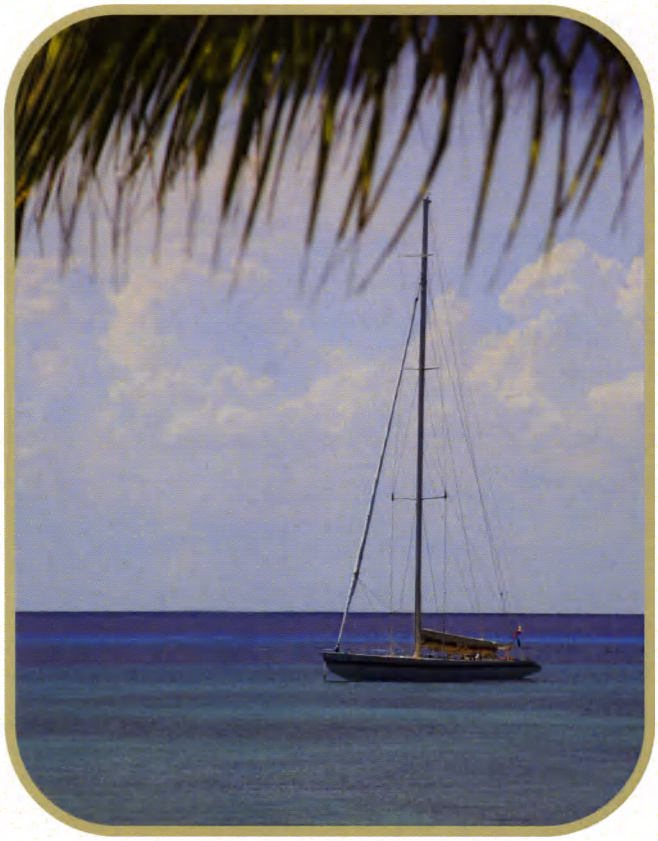
BODY YAWN*

Time: 5 minutes or more

4TH PART – LIFT LEGS BACK TO THE BEGINNING POSITION

- Engage your core muscles and lift your legs back up to the starting position. Note: The feet stay connected to the floor during this entire process.
- Pause for a few breaths and then repeat this sequence several times.
- Uncross the legs and do the same sequence by twisting to the other side.
- Savasasna: When you are finished lay down, with your arms by your sides, legs flat on the floor, with your ankles turned out to the side.
- Tune into your breath and feel your breath coming in and out of your nose. The belly and chest and rise on the inhale, and the fully body descends on the exhale.
- Ride the wave of your breath....



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Integration: Savasana with Elliptical Breathing Meditation*

Time: 5 minutes or more

Description and Purpose

After you get into a comfortable position lying on your back, try the Elliptical Breathing Meditation. This will help you get connected to your breath and use intention to balance all of your systems.

I love this traditional yoga asana because you get to completely relax all of your muscles and be bathed in the Light that you are! Feel the sensations all over your body. Systematically move your awareness to every single part. Feel your aliveness. Feel your life force pulsing through every muscle and every tissue.

Notice if you can feel a slight effervescence just under the skin. I call this the "Somatic Buzz" because I find these sensations unique while doing Gentle Yoga through Somatic Exploration.

As you continue to observe, through witness consciousness, the Prana is coursing through your body/mind/spirit and aligning you to your truest magnificent nature.

Namaste', James Knight

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Integration: Savasana with Elliptical Breathing Meditation*

Time: 5 minutes or more

Benefits

1. Relaxes the body.
2. Promotes peace of mind: calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression.
3. Allows for graceful integration of new and beneficial neuromuscular information.
4. Reduces headache, fatigue, and insomnia.
5. Helps to lower blood pressure.
6. Trains your brain into Alpha brainwave. This bandwidth, or frequency, is very beneficial for mind/body/spirit integration and healing on all levels.
7. Balances and harmonizes all systems: Mind/Emotion/Body/Spirit.

Teaching Points

- Lay in a comfortable position on the floor.
- If you don't have pressure in your lower back than lay with your legs stretched out and your ankles open to the side. Separate your legs 12 inches or more.
- Arms are by your sides with your palms facing up. It helps to lift and tuck the shoulders under slightly.
- Slowly roll your head on the floor, side to side, to make sure you aren't holding any "secret" tension in the neck muscles.
- Relax the face. There is space between the upper and lower jaw. Lips can be slightly open and/or soft.
- Eyes are closed and gaze is turned inwards.
- Take a round of cleansing breaths: breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth while making an audible sound.
- Soften your entire body and invite gravity to gently bring your closer to the earth.

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INTEGRATION: SAVASANA WITH ELLIPTICAL BREATHING MEDITATION*

Time: 5 minutes or more

ELLIPTICAL BREATHING MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS:

In ONE breath in:

- Bring your awareness to the sensation of your toes.
- On an in-breath use your imagination and trace an imaginary "sheet of energy" being pulled up from your toes all the way up to a point between your eyebrows.
- At the top of the in-breath move your awareness from the point between the eyebrows, travel through the center of your brain (passing through the pineal gland) and draw your attention to the back of the neck.

In ONE breath out:

- On the exhale, visualize a line of energy rolling down each vertebrate, like pearls on a necklace. Keep guiding your awareness and all the way down the back side of your legs, down towards your heels and curling up the feet, back to your toes. You are now ready for the next inhale.

Be the observer and become Witness Consciousness:

- Make this easy and effortless.
- Imagine that this loop of energy that you are creating is balancing harmonizing your energy body: front and back, side-to-side, and top and bottom.
- After a while (minimum three minutes) return to a natural breath and experience yourself

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JAMES KNIGHT

James is an Integrative Therapist who has practiced in the field of Healing Arts for over twenty years. He maintains a thriving private practice and runs events and workshops out of his office in San Diego, California. He is certified in Core Energetics, Hanna Somatic Education, massage therapy, and yoga/meditation instruction. He is the originator of Gentle Yoga through Somatic Exploration (GYSE) methodology and created the Gentle Yoga through Somatic Exploration DVD , a comprehensive series of somatic movements for the entire body. For more information on James, visit www.EnergyFlowing.com.

GYSE DVD AND WORKBOOK

2-DVD Set! Be guided into a Somatic Yoga home practice designed to help you **dissolve chronic pain**, increase flexibility, and gain strength. The DVD's contain 4 comprehensive, self-paced, 20-minute segments plus a bonus 15-minute Visual Healing Meditation.

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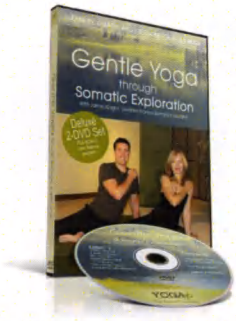

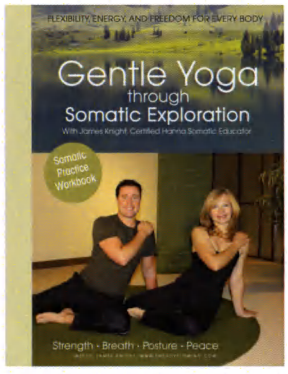

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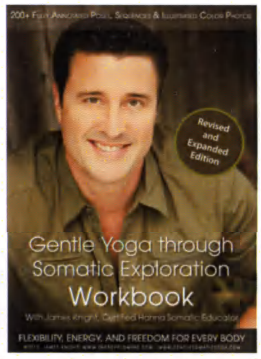

In-depth Gentle Yoga through Somatic Exploration (GYSE) Workbook that details the purpose, description, benefits, teaching points and modifications to somatic yoga movements. Contains history and philosophy of the integration of Yoga and Somatics through the work of Thomas Hanna, and other leaders in this progressive field.

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Gentle Yoga through Somatic Exploration Workbook

With James Knight, Certified Hanna Somatic Educator

"James Knight is one of the world's most sensitive, experienced and intuitive yoga instructors. As you move your body with James's flowing direction, you begin to understand how your body, mind, heart and soul connect. Releasing the tension in your body, opening your heart and letting go of your life's burdens becomes a natural daily experience. Give yourself this gift and don't look back. You will be SO glad you did!"

Author of The Call: Awakening the Angelic Human by Toni Sar'h Petrinovich

"James Knight is very professional, personable, and incredibly knowledgeable about somatic exercises. He has worked wonders on my back. His workshops, where he guides you through gentle exercises for the body and meditations for the mind, are fun and informative. I'm looking forward to taking more!" **C.W.**

"James Knight, is a well educated practitioner of Somatics Muscle Integration techniques and massage as a therapy. With insight and easy to follow directions, limitation in my shoulder opened up quickly to movement and strength." **Dr. John Harrison**

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